

# History of the Punjab 1500-1858

K. S. NARANG

# **HISTORY OF THE PUNJAB 1500-1858**

*By*

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**(Revised & Enlarged Edition)**

**1969**

**U.C. KAPUR & SONS**

**Kashmere Gate**

**DELHI - 6**

***Price : Rs. 15.00***

**Printed at Kapur Printing Press, Kashmere Gate, Delhi.**

## **PREFACE**

**This book covers nearly four hundred crucial years of Punjab history from the time of Guru Nanak born in 1469 to the uprising of 1857. It covers the syllabus for the B.A. students prescribed in Punjab University, Chandigarh, Punjabi University, Patiala and Kurukshetra University. Some of the important features of the book are :**

- \* All the important topics which are generally set in examinations have been covered fully but to the point; while continuity of the subject has been retained at the same time.**

- \* Special care has been taken to make the treatment detailed, yet simple and to the point.**

- \* The material presented is based on standard, authoritative and research works so far published.**

- \* No originality is claimed, but an honest attempt has been made to deal with the subject in an attractive manner keeping in view the difficulties and limitations of an average student.**

- \* In this edition the authors have, on the whole, adhered to the original plan of the book; but in its revision past errors have been corrected and considerable fresh matter based on latest researches has been added.**

- \* The enterprising and energetic publishers have given a new orientation to the get up of this edition.**

**The authors take this opportunity of expressing their gratitude to Professor Fauja Singh, Head of the Department of History in Punjabi University, Patiala, and to Dr. K.S. Bedi of Chandigarh, for thier kindly rendering great help in improving this edition.**

**Authors**



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# CHAPTER I

## PUNJAB—ITS PHYSICAL FEATURES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON ITS HISTORY

### I INTRODUCTORY

The word 'Punjab' consists of two Persian words : 'punj' and 'āb'. 'Punj' means 'five' and 'āb' means 'water' or 'rivers'.

**Punjab (I) and Punjab (P) — 'Punjab', Now a Misnomer**

The land in the north-west of the vast Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent is known as the Punjab — 'Punjab', Now a Misnomer because therein flow five tributaries of the Indus River — the Jehlum, the Chenab, the Ravi, the Beas and the Satluj. At present, however, this 'Land of Five Rivers' or the Punjab<sup>1</sup> is not held by one single State. In 1947, the predominantly Muslim areas of this land were given to Pakistan — a newly created State — and the eastern portion of this land remained a part of India. Thus, a brutal dismemberment of the Punjab took place and it was divided into two Punjabs. The West Punjab, now called the Punjab (P), went to Pakistan, whereas East Punjab, now called the Punjab (I), became an important frontier State in the north-west of the Indian Union. In 1966, the latter was again divided into two parts, the Punjab and Haryana. In the Pakistan-held Punjab, now three rivers — the Jehlum, the Chenab and the Ravi — flow, whereas in the Indian Punjab only two rivers — the Beas and the Satluj — flow. Thus, the word 'Punjab' — both for the Pakistan-held Punjab and the Indian Punjab — is now a misnomer, as neither of these Punjabs — the Indian and the Pakistan-held — is watered by five rivers.

**Boundaries of the Punjab Changing from Time to Time**

But it must be remembered that the boundaries of the Punjab have been altered substantially not only in recent times, but also in the various periods of its history. Its boundaries have been contracting and expanding. For example, in the days of the Rig Veda, the Punjab included all the territory covered by the seven rivers — the 'Sapt Sandhus' — namely, Vitasta

1. Mannucci says that this land is also called 'the land of five waters'.

(Jehlum), Asuki (Chenab), Parushni (Ravi), Vipas (Beas), Sutdru (Satluj), Saraswati (which is now dried up) and the Sindhu. It was then known as 'Sapt Sandhu' or Brahmavarta and was inhabited by five major tribes or the Panch-janas—Anus, Purus, Bharats, Yadus and Turvasus. In the Mauryan and the Kushan Periods, the boundaries of the Punjab extended beyond the Hindukush. During the period of the Delhi Sultanate, the frontier of the Punjab or the Lahore Province extended up to Peshawar. In the early Mughal Period, the Punjab extended from the River Satluj to the River Indus—a distance of 180 *kos* and in its breadth it extended from Bhimhar to Chaukandi, also a distance of 180 *kos*.<sup>1</sup> At a later stage, the Punjab was divided into two provinces—the Province of Lahore and that of Multan<sup>2</sup> and throughout the Mughul Period, this arrangement continued to be the same. With the rise of the Sikh power in the Punjab, its boundaries were once again recast. In the days of Ranjit Singh, the Punjab or the 'Lahore Kingdom', as it was called, extended right up to the Khyber in the west and up to the Satluj in the east. After the Mutiny, when the British finally took over the administration of the Punjab, they added the Haryana Prant (including Hissar), and Delhi to the Punjab. In 1901, the disintegration of the Punjab started. Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of India, separated the border districts beyond the Indus from the administrative control of the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab and placed them in the charge of a chief commissioner, directly responsible to the Indian Government. In 1912, Delhi was also made independent of the Punjab. And the worst happened in 1947, when even the very central areas of the Punjab which, for ages together, had formed a single whole, were given over to Pakistan. With the separation of Haryana, the size of the Punjab has diminished still further.

Thus, the old undivided Punjab was the land of the five rivers. Its total area was more than one lakh square miles and its population on the eve of partition was more than two crores. It lay between 27° 39' and 35° 2' N latitude and 69° 35' and 70° 39' E longitude. It consisted of 29 districts and included the important and the historic Cities of Lahore, Multan, Sakla or Sialkot and Dipalpur. The new Punjab now forms a small frontier State of the Indian

Undivided  
Punjab—Area  
and Population

1. See Sarkar : *India and Aurangzeb*, p. LXXII
2. See Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari*, Ain 15

Union. Its area is now reduced to only 50,230 square km. and its total population, according to the latest census, is 1,11,35,069.

**Punjab (I)—Its Area and Population** It has only 11 districts, including the newly formed ones. Lahore, which for about a thousand years, was the capital city of the Punjab, is now not included in it. It is why a new capital, Chandigarh, has been constructed in the submontane region of the Kharar Tehsil in the Ambala District. This is at present the seat of both the Punjab and the Haryana Governments.

**Various Names Given to the 'Punjab' in the Past** The 'Punjab' has been called by different names in the different periods of its history. In the Rig Veda days, when it was at the height of its glory, it was called 'Sapt Sandhu'—the land of the seven rivers. At that time, seven rivers used to flow through this land. They were Sindhu, Jehlum (Vitasta), Chenab (Asuki) Ravi (Parushni) Beas (Vipas) Satluj (Sutdru) and Saraswati (Sarsuti) which is now dried up. After some time, when the Greeks occupied the Punjab, they called it 'Pentapotamia'<sup>1</sup> and their historians tell us that in those days this land had as many as thirty-seven flourishing cities and towns. A few centuries later, we hear another name of the Punjab. Cunningham in his *Ancient Geography of India* says that for several centuries the Punjab<sup>2</sup> was known by the name of 'Taki', after a powerful tribe of the same name which ruled here for a pretty long time<sup>3</sup>. In the medieval days and under Ranjit Singh, the Punjab was generally called 'the Lahore Province' or 'the Lahore Kingdom', after the name of the capital city. But under the British rule, it came to be called 'the Province of the Punjab' and after independence, as mentioned above, the Indian portion of the 'Punjab' got the name 'East Punjab'. In the new constitution of India, it is called 'The Punjab State'.

However, whatever be the political divisions of the region called the Punjab, historians are concerned with the whole region, as it was and has been through the ages. Political divisions, thus, do not make any difference to the subject of our study.

1. Penta-Potamia from Greek 'Pente' meaning five and 'Potamas' meaning 'rivers'

2. R.K. Mukerjee : *Hindu Civilisation*, p. 68

3. *Cunningham's Ancient Geography of India*, edited by S. M. Shastri, pp. 170-173



## PHYSICAL FEATURES OF THE PUNJAB

**Physical Features of the Old, Undivided Punjab** The Punjab of olden days was a triangular piece of land, lying between the Indus and the Jamuna. It was bounded in the north by the vast Himalayan ranges ; on the west, by the Suleiman and the Kirthar ranges ; in the east, by the River Jamuna ; and in the south, by the Sind and the Rajputana deserts. It can be divided into three physical regions :

- I. The mountain ranges of the Himalayas
- II. The plains
- III. The submontane regions

**I. The Mountain Ranges of the Himalayas and the Suleiman.**—The Himalayas<sup>1</sup> are 'a series of parallel but converging ranges intersected by valleys and big plateaus'. They run across the whole of northern India from Assam in the east to Afghanistan in the west, *i.e.* they are spread over an area, 1500 miles long and 150 to 200 miles broad. They serve the purpose of a great wall which divides us from the rest of Asia and protects us from the bleak winds from the north. The height of the ranges is not uniform and there are three distinct sub-divisions of these ranges :

- (a) The Greater Himalayas—with an average elevation of 20,000 feet, and always covered with snow.
- (b) The Lesser Himalayas—with an average elevation of six to seven thousand feet.
- (c) The Outer Himalayas—lying between the Lesser Himalayas and the plains, with an average elevation of about 3000 feet. It is also called the sub-Himalayan region or the submontane region.

These mountain ranges of the Himalayas are a great boon to the Punjab. It is the melting of snow and the falling of rain on these mountains that constitute the chief source of water for the rivers of the Punjab. It has been rightly said, "If Egypt is a gift of the Nile, the plain of the Punjab is a gift of the Himalayas." Besides, it is the Himalayas against which the monsoons strike

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1. Himalayas is derived from two words. The words 'Him'. meaning 'snow' ; and 'Alaya' meaning a house. Thus, the combination means the house or home of snow.

and give us plenty of rainfall. It is also in its ranges that some of the best hill stations of India, such as Simla and Dalhousie, are situated. They are the best health resorts serving the Punjab. Thus, the Himalayas are a great source of the economic prosperity of the Punjab and have also greatly added to the fertility of its land and to the beauty of its landscape.

In its western ranges which are called the Suleiman and the Kirthar Ranges, there are a number of 'passes' through which India maintained contact with the central Asian countries. It was through these passes that all the invaders of India, from Alexander to Shah Zaman, invaded the Punjab. Some of the most important passes are the Khyber, Kurram, Tochi, Gomal and Bolan.

*Khyber Pass*—This has been the most important pass which begins near Jamrud, ten and a half miles west of Peshawar and twists through the hills for about thirty-three miles in a north-westerly direction till it debouches at Dakka. The Khyber mountains actually form the last spurs of the Safed-Koh, as that mighty range sinks down into the valley of the Kabul River. This pass has always been the great northern route from Afghanistan into India and the most important points in this route are Ali Masjid (ten miles from Jamrud), Landi Kotal (the summit of the pass, ten miles farther), and Tor Kham.

The Mughal Emperors always attached great importance to this pass. Babar raided the Punjab, each time passing through it. Humayun, too, traversed this pass more than once. The Khyber route leads directly across the plains of the Punjab to the interior through the narrow gap between the desert and the mountains. Hence, this pass has been more frequently used by the foreign invaders of India, and this fact explains the strategic position of the Khyber Pass as the first line of defence, with the narrow plains to the west of the Jamuna, above Delhi, as the second.

*Kurram River Pass*—Next to Khyber is the Kurram River Pass which lies between Paiwar Kotal in the west and the borders of Miranzai in the east. Its maximum length from there to Paiwar Kotal is 72 miles, as the crow flies, with its breadth varying from twelve to twenty-four miles. Bounded on the north by the Safed-Koh, which separates it from Ningarhar, it adjoins Para-Chamkani and the country of the Masozai on the east, its south-eastern corner abutting on the Miranzai

country of the Kohat District. From Khost Khoram, the highest peak of the Kurram River range, descends a spur through whose extremity the Kurram River appears to have cut a passage opposite Sadda, and which divides the valley into two parts, the Upper and the Lower Kurram. Rising in the hills near Ahmed Khel, it flows at first south-westward, and then turns sharply to the east, entering the Agency of Kurram near Khar-Tachi and thence flowing due east to the Kurram Fort. To the east of that place its trend is somewhat southward, and at Sadda it turns sharply to the south until it reaches Maro Khel, whence it curves south-east as far as the Thal in the Kohat District.

Humayun, who held Kabul in 1552, occupied Kurram before his conquest of India. Under Akbar, it formed a part of the Toman of Bangash or the Bangshat, being known as the Upper Bangash to distinguish it from the Lower Bangash, now the Kohat District. The Afghans of this tract were the disciples of Pir-i-Roshan and, hence, became known as Roshanias. This sect headed the Afghan opposition to the Mughal rule and Kurram formed one of their chief strongholds. The line of advance into Afghanistan through the Kurram Valley is easy, and Lord Roberts used it when he marched towards Kabul in 1898. The road to Kabul leaves the river far to the south before it crosses at Paiwar Kotal.

*Tochi Pass*—Between the Kurram Valley and the Gomal River is a large block of very rough mountainous country known as Waziristan after the turbulent clan which occupies it. In the north, it is drained by the Tochi. Westward of the Tochi Valley the country rises into lofty mountains. The upper waters of the Tochi and its affluents drain two fine glens known as Birmal and Shawal to the west of the country of the Mahsud Wazirs. The Tochi Valley is the direct route from India to Ghazni, and about nine centuries ago, when that now-decayed town was the capital of a powerful kingdom, it must have often heard the tramp of armed men. The loftiest peaks of the Tochi Valley, Waziristan, Shuidar and Pirghal, overhang Birmal. An alternative route from Kabul lies through Bannu and the Kurram Valley to a point lower down the Indus where it joins by a route from Ghazni through the Tochi Valley.

*Gomal Pass*—East of Kajuri Kach the Gomal route passes through tribal territory from where it debouches into the plains of the District of Dera Ismail Khan. The Gomal route is the



oldest of all the trade routes. Down it comes every year a succession of caravans led and followed by thousands of well-armed Pathan traders. This route leads along the valley of the Gomal River, through southern Waziristan, from Murtaza and Domandi, on the borders of Afghanistan and Baluchistan to the Afghan plateau. It is one of the oldest and most-frequented trade routes between southern Afghanistan and the Indus Valley.

*Bolan Pass*—Far to the south lies the route from Qandhar through Quetta and the Bolan to Sukkar on the Indus. But here the invaders and the conquerors of the lower Indus were blocked by the desert while striking eastwards for the great cities of the plains of the Punjab. This pass was less important as a gateway of India than the others. For, just beyond the region where it debouches into the Punjab plain, stretches the desert of Rajasthan, which bans access to the interior of India. The Khyber route, on the other hand, as stated above, leads directly across the plains of the Punjab to the interior through the narrow gap between the desert and the mountains.

*Mala Kand Pass*—This pass crosses the range north of Peshawar, and leads from Sam Ranizai into the Swat Valley. The pass is traversed by an ancient Buddhist road. Zain Khan Koka, a general of Akbar, built a fort there in 1587.

*Chitral Pass*—Chitral is the Pathan country which ends at the Lowari Pass. Beyond, right up to the main axis of the Hindu-Koh is Chitral. It comprises the basin of the Yarkun or Chitral River from its distant source in the Shawar Shur glacier to Arnawai, where it receives from the west the waters of the Bashgul and is, thenceforth, known as the Kunar. Its western boundary is the Durand line, which follows a lofty chain sometimes called the Kafirstan Range. Another great spur of the Hindu Koh known as the Shandur range divides Chitral on the east from the basin of the Yasin River and the territories included in the Gilgit Agency.

*Tibet Passes*—The trade with Tibet is carried on over lofty passes. Among these are the following: (i) The Kangwa La (15,500 feet) on the India-Tibet Road, through Simla; (ii) the Mana (18,000 feet); (iii) the Niti (16,570 feet); (iv) the Balcha Dhura in Garhwal; (v) The Anta Dhura (17,270 feet); and (vi) The Lampuja Dhura (18,000 feet). These were the main passes

of the Tibet side which were commonly used as trade routes. No invader ever came through these passes till the recent Chinese attempt to penetrate into India through them. Lieut. Colonel, Godwin Austin has given an admirable summary of the topography of the Himalayas.

**Kashmir and Central Asian Passes**—These smaller trade routes which pass through Kashmir are among the central Asian trade routes over the western Himalayas. Bara Lacha, the mountain pass through the Lahul canton of the Kulu Valley is a trade route from Darcha in Lahul to the Rupshu country in Ladakh. The Rohtang Pass cuts across the Himalayan range which separates the Kulu Valley from Lahul. This pass leads from Koksar in Lahul to Rolla in Kothi Manali of Kulu. The highroad to Leh and Yarkand from Kulu and Kangra goes over this pass, which can be traversed by laden mules and ponies.

**II. The Plains.**—In the south of the Himalayas, the Punjab consists of one vast alluvial plain, broken only by the wide and often-shifting channels of its five rivers. The average height of this area is not more than 1000 ft. above sea-level. This vast plain has two distinct sub-divisions—the eastern plain and the western plain. The eastern plain consists of the area between the Ravi and the Jamuna. It is more fertile and populous than its western counterpart which stretches from the Ravi to the Indus. But generally, and since the time of Akbar, this vast plain has been classified into five well-known sections called intra-fluvial tracts or 'doabs' which mean areas between two water streams. The name of each 'doab' is composed of the initial letters taken from the names of the two rivers with which it is enclosed. These 'doabs', in order from west to east, are :

- (i) The 'Sind Sagar Doab'—The area between the Jehlum and the Indus. This area is not so fertile as the others.
- (ii) The 'Jetch or Chaj Doab'—This comprises the area lying between the Rivers Jehlum and Chenab. It is much more fertile than the Sind Sagar Doab. Some of the important towns situated in this *doab* are Gujrat, Bhera and Shahpur.
- (iii) The 'Rachna Doab'—It includes the rich fertile area between the Ravi and the Chenab. Some of the impor.



tant towns in this *doab* are Gujranwala and Sheikhpora.

- (iv) The 'Bari Doab'—It is the most important area of the Punjab, comprising the rich alluvial plain lying between the Beas and the Ravi. This is also called 'Majha', the middle tract and the two most important cities of the Punjab—Lahore and Amritsar—are situated in it. A portion of this *doab*, including Lahore, has gone to Pakistan after the Partition.
- (v) The 'Bist Jullundur Doab'—It is called the real 'doab' and includes the territory lying between the Beas and the Satluj. It is also a very productive area and two important cities of the Punjab—Jullundur and Hoshiarpur—are situated in it.

Besides these five *doabs*, there is another vast plain lying between the Satluj and the Jamuna. This is generally called the 'Malwa' area of the Punjab, because it is as fertile as 'Malwa' of central India. It is in this great plain that Ludhiana, Ambala, and Patiala are situated. The territory beyond Ambala is called Haryana which has many important cities, such as Karnal, Panipat, and Rohtak. Most of the decisive battles of the Indian history have also been fought in this very plain.

**III. The Submontane Region.**—The submontane region of the Punjab consists of that narrow strip of the country adjoining the Himalayas into which run its spurs, such as the Shiwalik and the high hills of Kasauli. This submontane zone includes two Tehsils of Ambala, the erstwhile Kalsi State, the greater part of the Hoshiarpur District, and portions of the various Tehsils of Gurdaspur and, in the north of the salt range, the abrupt, rocky and precipitous land of the Sialkot District. This comprises some 6680 square miles of area and is inhabited by people who differ little in race, religion, or language from their neighbours in the plains. This tract, although it receives plenty of rainfall and abounds in vegetation, is not very productive, nor is the density of population in this area as high as that in the plains. The average height of these 'low hills' varies from 1000 to 3000 ft.

The climate of the Punjab is one of extremes. In winter, the cold in certain areas of the Punjab is severer and more rigorous than in almost any other region of India, and at certain places, the temperature falls even below 18°F., i.e. much below the

freezing-point; whereas in summer, it rises at certain places to even 120°F. Similar is the case with rains. The Himalayan tract enjoys an annual rainfall of 80 to 120 inches; the submontane regions of Sialkot, Hoshiarpur and Pathankot, from 30 to 40 inches; whereas in the western plains, the average rainfall is hardly ten inches. It is extremely hot in May and June. The monsoon season begins from the middle of July. In summer, the heat, dust and scorching winds are rather intolerable. Similarly, the winters are intensely cold and vigorous. Sharp frosts are not infrequent and water exposed to the air freezes at night.

**Climate**

Such wide variations are not only confined to the climate. Even in point of fertility of land, there is no homogeneity. There are tracts of land in the Bari and Bist Doabs which are very productive and densely populated. There are, at the same time, parts in the Ambala Division, now forming Haryana, 'which look like arid deserts and bushy jungles'. Linguistically, too, this land of the five rivers is not homogeneous. Punjabi, Urdu, Pahari and western Hindi are spoken in its different parts.

**Soil**

### III

#### THE PEOPLE OF THE PUNJAB

The inhabitants of the Punjab comprise many racial and sub-racial groups. Jats, Rajputs, Pathans, Gujjars, Arains, Khattris, Aroras and Baniyas are some of them. Of all these groups, the Jats are the most numerous and virile. They make up at least two-fifths of the total population of the Punjab. It is difficult to determine the origin of the Jats. Tod writes<sup>1</sup> that these Jats trace their descent from one of the thirty-six royal Rajput tribes and claim a close connection with the 'Bhotias'. Some, however, say that they are the descendants of the ancient Getal or Juetoh from Scythia. There is still another view, according to which the Jats are connected with the Jarthikas mentioned in the Mahabharata.<sup>2</sup>

**Jats**

The Jats are 'uniformly sturdy, manly, industrious and honest folk.' One of the fundamental traits of their character is the ins-

1. Tod : *Annals of Rajasthan*, Vol. 1, p. 106

2. See Sir David Ross—*The Land of Five Rivers & Sind*, pp. 83-84

inct of tribal freedom and of tribal kinship.<sup>1</sup> Another important trait of their character is their marauding spirit. They are easily excitable, impatient and prone to aggrandize themselves at the expense of their weak neighbours. It is generally said of the Jat, "He is your friend only so long as you have a stick in your hand." "If he runs amuck, it takes God to hold him." There is still another saying, "A Jat, a Bhat, a caterpillar and a widow—these four—are best when hungry ; if they eat their fill, they do harm." They are, however, splendid fighters. A large number of them embraced Sikhism during the days of Guru Arjan and, according to Indubhushan Banerjee, it was partly on account of the admission of a large number of Jats into the fold of Sikhism that it gradually drifted from a sect of peaceful devotees to a brotherhood of holy warriors<sup>2</sup>. In the days of the 'Misals' and Ranjit Singh, the Sikh Jats formed 'the flower of the Khalsa Army.'

In times of peace, however, the Jats are successful tillers of the soil and are quiet and industrious. They form the finest rural population of the Punjab. They are scattered all over it and do not profess one religion. In the south-eastern parts, they are mostly Hindus ; in the west, most of them belong to the Muslim faith ; whereas in the central Punjab, they are mostly Sikhs. They have, however, certain common traits. They are proud of being Jats and consider themselves superior to other castes. They are also addicted to strong drinks. The Sikh Jats are men of faith and are capable of making every kind of sacrifice for their religion.

Besides the Jats, the other important sub-racial groups in the rural areas are the Pathans, Rajputs, Gujjars, Arains, and Malis.

The Rajputs—both Hindus and Muslims—and the Pathans—purely Muslims—occupy as high a status in the society as the Jats ; but Gujjars, Arains and Malis are definitely regarded as inferior to the Jats and Rajputs. The Pathans inhabit mostly the south-west Punjab.

In the cities and the towns of the Punjab, the most important groups of people are the Khattris, Aroras and Banias. Although they belong to the same Indo-Aryan race to which the Jats do,

1. This is a common saying in the Punjab : "Jat Jattan de, Phaghu kehda."

2. L. B. Banerjee : *Evolution of the Khalsa*, Vol. II p. 44

yet in habits and ways of thinking, they are different from the Jats. They are very active and enterprising and are quite clever in their trades. Unlike the Jats, they do not depend

**Khatri, Aroras  
and Banias**

upon physical power for their livelihood. They earn their bread through wit, humour, tact and wisdom.

Banking, trade and industries of the towns are mostly in their hands. They are quite well off and are generally highly educated. Most of the key posts under the Government are also held by them. They form the 'bourgeois' class of the Punjab.

The Khatri and Aroras have further sub-divisions among them. All the Khatri are divided into three groups : the Chhatrpatris (Seths. Khannas, Malhotras and Kapurs), the Barajatis (Chopras, Kakkars, Mehtas) and the Bawanjatis (Sethi, Sodhi, Bedi, Anand, Bhallas, etc.). The Aroras are also divided into two groups : Utradhis (belonging to the North) and Dakhnis (belonging to the South).

#### IV

### EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL FEATURES ON THE PUNJAB'S HISTORY

The physical features of the Punjab have exercised a great influence on its history. Syed Mohammad Latif says : "Placed

**Punjab, because  
of its Geographi-  
cal Position,  
Has Played the  
Role of a Gate-  
way to India**

as it is by Nature in a locality which gives it a crowning position and serving as the gateway to India, every invader from the North has, by its possession, sought the road to fame"<sup>1</sup>. It is through the passes in the Suleiman and Kirthar Ranges—the Passes of Khyber, Gomai, Tochi and Bolan

that all the invaders, from Alexander to Shah Zaman, entered India. The Punjab, whose boundaries in ancient and medieval times extended right up to the passes, therefore, played the role of a gateway to India and it was here—in its plains—that the initial and decisive battles were fought by the Punjabis to check the

**All Decisive  
Battles Fought  
Here**

invaders from entering the interior of their country. Sometimes, they were successful and did not let the invader touch the sacred soil of their motherland. But at other times, the enemy proved

too powerful to be resisted. Thus, situated as it is, the brunt of

1. Latif : *History of the Punjab*—See preface (ii)



the attack of most foreign invaders for thousands of years was borne by the Punjab. It was many times that its cities and towns were burnt, looted and plundered. Its inhabitants were massacred and its monuments destroyed.

History clearly illustrates how the Punjab bore the brunt of the attacks of different invaders. When the Aryans advanced to occupy the Punjab, certain 'Dasyus'—the aborigines of the Punjab—gave a tough fight to them. A little later, the Persians invaded India under Cyrus and Darius, and again the Punjab bore the fury of their attacks and was eventually annexed to the Persian Empire. The contemporaneous sources tell us that it formed "the twentieth satrapy" of the Persian Empire and it used to pay "360" talents of gold dust as tribute to the Persian Emperor."

(i)  
Illustrations

Similarly, when Alexander invaded India, the brave Punjabis under Porus and other tribal chiefs bore the brunt of the attack. They fought so well that the Greeks lost confidence and despite Alexander's stirring appeals to his soldiers, the latter refused to cross the Beas. This shows how, because of its geographical situation, the Punjab suffered heavy losses in men and money while fighting against the Greeks, whereas the rest of India continued 'to live her life of splendid isolation and soon forgot the passing of the 'Macedonian Storm'.<sup>1</sup> The Indian writers—Hindus, Buddhists and Jainis—of those days felt no concern with the fate of the Punjab and, therefore, have not made 'even the faintest allusion to Alexander and his deeds.'

Later on, when the Scythians and the Huns invaded India, the Punjab again suffered most and the rest of India remained as calm as ever. In the eighth century, when the Arabs invaded India through Sind, they realized their mistake. They felt that they had not entered India through the proper gateway. The Turks then learnt a lesson from the Arabs and they, therefore, invaded the Punjab first. Though the brunt of the attack of Mahmud of Ghazni was borne by the whole of northern India, yet it was the Punjab which, for more than one hundred and fifty years, remained under the heels of the Ghaznavis, whereas the rest of India recovered its independence immediately after the death of Mahmud. Later on, the Turkish rulers of Delhi—Shahab-ud-din

1. *Early History of India* by V.A. Smith, p-110.



Muhammad Ghori, Qutub-ud-din Aibek and Iltutmish—made the Punjab the base of their war-like operations and conquered the rest of India. It was also because of its geographical position, *i.e.* the Punjab lying on the regular track of the invaders from the north-west—that it suffered most heavily when the foreign hordes under Targhi, Timur, Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Durrani looted and plundered India.

Thus, we see that Nature has placed the Punjab in such a geographical position that in the various periods of the Indian history, it has either “served as a bulwark to India against all the invasions from the north and west” or “served as a base of warlike operations for conquests beyond its classic rivers.”

It is also because of its situation that when the British started to conquer India, the Punjab was the last to be conquered. The British had not entered India through its old land-routes, but through new sea-routes. They had first occupied the towns on the Eastern and the Western coasts of India and had then conquered Bengal. The Punjab, being situated in the extreme north-west, was naturally the last to be conquered.

The Punjab rivers have also played an important part in the history of our country. Sometimes, they served as boundaries of *Subahs* and *Sarkars*, as in the time of the Mughals. Besides, these rivers were often used “as means of defence and especially during rains they served as great barriers to the invaders. It was only on account of this reason that the invaders generally followed a more northerly route to Delhi just below the hills where the rivers were narrow and the work of bridge-building was easier.”<sup>1</sup>

Besides, it is because of the physical features of the Punjab that most of the decisive battles of the Indian history have been fought on the vast plains of the Punjab, stretching from the Satluj to the Jamuna. The Punjabis always first tried to check the invaders in the north-western portion of their land but, when the latter came out successful, they would try to penetrate farther into the Indo-Gangetic plain. The Indian rulers beyond the Jamuna then always thought it prudent to fight them on the west of the

(ii)  
Part Played by  
the Punjab  
Rivers

(iii)  
Decisive Battles  
of Indian History  
Fought in the  
South-eastern  
Plains of the  
Punjab because  
of Geographical  
Reasons

1. H.R. Gupta : *Studies in the Later Mughal History of the Punjab*, p. 7

Jamuna in the vast plain lying between the Satluj and the Jamuna. It is why the most decisive battles of India—those of Thanesar, Kurukshetra, Tarain, Sirhind and Panipat—were fought in this portion of the Punjab plains.

The physical features of the Punjab have influenced its history in another way also. The Punjab consists of rich and fertile plains.

(iv)  
Its Fertility  
Attracted the  
Invaders

If it had been an arid land like Sind, very few invaders would have thought of attacking and occupying it over and over again. The riches, the fertility and the good climate of the Punjab had always whetted the rapacity of the invaders and, consequently, they repeated their invasions with greater frequency, till they became the masters of it.

(v) Virility and  
Sturdiness of  
Punjabis, also  
due to the Geo-  
graphical Posi-  
tion of the  
Punjab

Being at the gateway of India, the Punjabis have always kept themselves armed. They are the gate-keepers of India and the gate-keepers must be strong and armed to be able to check the undesirable intruders. It is, thus, because of the peculiar geographical position that the people of the Punjab are so virile and warlike. They know their responsibility full well. On their strength and unity depends the welfare of India. Nature commands them to check the enemy at the gate of which they are the gate-keepers. They know their duty. They have acquitted themselves well in the past; they are at present prepared for the defence of their motherland and they shall defend it in the future also.

### Books for further study

- I. Cunningham : *Ancient Geography of India*
- II. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
- III. Ibbetson : *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*
- IV. R.K. Mookerjee : *Hindu Civilisation*
- V. Sir David Ross : *The Land of Five Rivers*
- VI. Gupta, H.R. : *Studies in the Later Mughal History of the Punjab*
- VII. Smith V.A. : *Early History of India*
- VIII. Indu Bhushan Bannerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa, Vol. II*
- IX. Tod : *Annals of Rajasthan*

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS OF THE PUNJAB IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

#### I

#### POLITICAL CONDITION

##### A. Punjab—A Cockpit of Triangular Struggle

The Punjab in the beginning of the sixteenth century formed a part of the Delhi Empire which was governed by Sultan Sikandar Lodhi<sup>1</sup> (1488-1517). The Muslim historians speak very highly of his justice, wisdom and benevolence. The author of *Tarikh-i-Daudi* says that Sultan Sikandar was an illustrious monarch and had a benevolent disposition. He was not fond of pomp and show and was known for his simplicity and piety. He was just, courageous, and God-fearing and beheld the weak and the strong with the same eye. And his Afghan nobles, though according to the Afghan theory of kingship, were entitled to have effective share in the Sultans' powers, were so much impressed by the power and wisdom of the Sultan that they had begun to receive the royal *farmans* two or three miles ahead of their headquarters. "But Sikandar's benevolence and sense of Justice", says Indubhushan Banerjee, "had very serious limitations. They stopped short with a section of his subjects, his own co-religionists. Under him, the State once more assumed a theocratic character." Like Feroze Tughlak, he followed a policy of religious intolerance towards the Hindus who formed the bulk of the population. He destroyed their temples and forced them to accept Islam. Once, he even decided to massacre all the Hindus who had gathered in tens of thousands at a fair at Kurukshetra, but was prevented from doing so by one of his advisers—Mian Abdullah. Thus, despite what the Mohammedan writers say about Sikandar's wisdom and justice, one need not be surprised at Guru Nanak's observation that in his age, *i.e.* the beginning of the sixteenth century, "Justice hath taken wing and fled."

1. The founder of the Lodhi Empire was Sultan Bahlol Lodhi (1451-1488). Guru Nanak was born during his reign.

In 1517, Sultan Sikandar died. He was succeeded by his son, Ibrahim Lodhi. Babar's estimate about him is that he marched without order and retired without plan. He was a tactless ruler and became immensely unpopular with his relatives and nobles. He failed to keep them in check and most of his time was occupied in subduing their rebellions in the different parts of his empire.

Thus, the Lodhi Empire, of which the Punjab formed a part in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, had no strong principle of cohesion. It rested on weak foundations. The Hindus, who formed the bulk of the population, were alienated by the policy of religious intolerance of the Lodhi Sultan; and the Afghan nobles who formed the mainstay of the strength of the Sultan were rebellious. Besides, as Erskine says: "The Lodhi monarchy at that time was a congeries of nearly independent principalities, jagirs and provinces, each ruled by a hereditary chief or by a zamindar or delegate from Delhi and the inhabitants looked more to their immediate governors who had absolute power in the province and in whose hands consequently lay their happiness and misery than to a distant and little-known sovereign."<sup>1</sup>

The Punjab was, thus, one of such principalities or provinces. But it should be carefully noted that in those days, the whole of the Punjab did not form one province. It was divided into two great *Subahs*—namely, Lahore and Multan. There were also a few small sub-provinces or subdivisions, such as Sirhind, Sultanpur and Dipalpur. Sometimes, they owed direct allegiance to the Delhi sovereign, but at other times, all these Punjab provinces or sub-provinces were placed under the control of one person. The Punjab governor, however, exercised little or no control over the Gakhars and the Gujjars who inhabited a portion of the Chaj Doab, i.e. the territory lying between the Jehlum and the Chenab.

Sultan Sikandar Lodhi, realizing the strategic importance of the Punjab, had appointed one of his close relatives, Tatar Khan, to exercise full control over all its provinces and sub-divisions. After the death of Tatar Khan, his son Daulat Khan was confirmed in his father's

1. Erskine : *Babar and Humayun*



place. So long as Sultan Sikandar remained alive, Daulat Khan remained loyal to the Delhi throne. But in 1517, when Ibrahim succeeded Sikandar, Daulat Khan, along with his sons, Ghazi Khan, Haji Khan, and Dilawar Khan, decided to carve out an independent State in the Punjab. He, therefore, began to plot an intrigue against Ibrahim. Besides, Alam Khan Lodhi (uncle of Ibrahim) was also aspiring after the Delhi throne and in order to achieve his aim, he often came to seek the support of the Punjab nobles. Coincidentally, when these Afghan nobles were conspiring against Ibrahim, Babar had captured Kabul and was planning to conquer the Punjab and advance to Delhi like his great and illustrious ancestor, Timur, who had done so over a hundred years earlier. From 1519 to 1525, Babar, so he writes in his own *Memoirs*, led as many as five expeditions into the Punjab, and by the policy of divide-and-rule, he created dissensions among the Afghans and eventually was successful in establishing his sway over it. Ibrahim Lodhi proved utterly incompetent to keep his nobles under control. He also failed to check the advance of the Mughal invader and in 1526 was defeated and killed in the battle of Panipat.

Thus, during this period of 1519-26, when the centrifugal tendencies were reigning supreme, the Punjab had become a cockpit of struggle of three powers—the Mughals, the Delhi Emperor Ibrahim Lodhi, and the Afghan nobles of the Punjab—and in this triangular contest, the Mughal Emperor ultimately came out successful.

Triangular Contest in the Punjab : 1519-1526

As the Punjab became an arena of internal revolts and wars for nearly a decade, the people of the Punjab suffered a great deal. Guru Nanak, who was living in this land in those days, gives a pathetic description of how the womenfolk suffered at the hands of the Mughal invader :

“They who (wore) beautiful tresses and had the partings of their hair dyed with vermillion, have their locks now shorn with scissors and dust is thrown upon their heads.

“Broken are their strings of pearls; wealth and beauty have become their bane. The order was given to the soldiers to take and dishonour them...”<sup>1</sup>.

1. Mecauliffe : *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, p. 112



## B. Intrigues of Daulat Khan and Babar's Invasions

As mentioned above, with the accession of Ibrahim Lodhi, there started serious political troubles in the Punjab. The new Sultan, being tactless and headstrong, soon lost the sympathy of his Afghan nobles and the latter began to conspire to overthrow him. When Ibrahim learnt that the Punjab Governor, Daulat Khan, was also entertaining hostile designs against him, he summoned him to the Court to explain his conduct. But Daulat Khan, instead of going personally, sent an evasive reply and to avert the wrath of the Sultan, he sent his youngest son Dilawar Khan to the Court. Ibrahim reprimanded him for his father's conduct and also took him round to show "a ghastly exhibition of disobedient commanders". He then told him that if his father entertained any hostile designs against him, he would suffer the same fate. He detained Dilawar Khan in Delhi. But, after some time, Dilawar managed to escape to Lahore and told his father all that he had seen and heard at Delhi.

The crafty old politician Daulat Khan then thought that his safety lay in severing all his connections with the Delhi Sultan.

Thereupon, he decided to join the Mughal invader, Babar, who had already made several raids into India. Consequently, he sent his son Dilawar Khan to Kabul to assure Babar of his support in his Indian conquests. Babar had already made up his mind to conquer northern India which was once overrun and occupied by his illustrious ancestor, Timur. Long before this invitation of Daulat Khan, Babar had led several expeditions into India. In 1504, he had raided the frontiers of the Punjab and had occupied Kohat. In 1519, he had captured Bhera and in the following year had again invaded and overrun all the territory up to Silakot. He had also reduced Gakhars and Gujjars to submission. One of the most contested battles of that invasion was fought at Sayyidpur, now called Eminabad in the Gujranwala District of the West Punjab. Guru Nanak and his disciple Mardana were at that time in the neighbourhood of the battlefield. Their hearts bled to see the sufferings of their countrymen. Guru Nanak, in his hymns, gives the following description of the great tragedy of Sayyidpur : "With the bridal procession of sin, Babar issued forth from Kabul and by force demanded

**Daulat Khan, the Governor of the Punjab, and Sultan Ibrahim Lodhi of Delhi Fall Out**

**Daulat Assures Babar of His Support in His Indian Conquests**

**Tragedy of Sayyidpur**

the hand of the bride (India). Modesty and religion have disappeared and falsehood marcheth in the van. People sing the paen of murder and smear themselves with the saffron of blood.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus, when Daulat Khan's son Dilawar Khan waited upon Babar to invite him to the Punjab, the Mughal invader was already in possession of a portion of the Punjab. He naturally welcomed the dissensions among the Afghans and thanked Dilawar for the assurances and support of his father. In 1524, Babar again left Kabul to conquer the Punjab and Delhi. This time, he was much more hopeful than before. So, within a short time, and without encountering any serious opposition, he occupied all the territory up to Lahore. But this rapid success of the Mughal invader greatly alarmed the Afghans and some of them, in defiance of Daulat Khan, organized the defence of Lahore and gave battle to

**Loot and  
Plunder of  
Dipalpur and  
Jullundur: 1524**

Babar. But as the Afghans were divided, the Mughals scored an easy victory. Babar, however, greatly resented the treachery of the Afghans for first inviting him and then offering resistance to him. Consequently, on entering Lahore, he ordered his soldiers to plunder its inhabitants and burn its bazaars. Next, he advanced to Dipalpur; stormed and plundered it and put its inhabitants to the sword. Thence, he advanced farther and overran the whole of the Jullundur Doab.

**Revolt of  
Daulat Khan**

After the conquest of the Punjab, Daulat Khan expected that the Mughal invader would appoint him the governor of all the newly conquered possessions. But, contrary to his expectations, Babar gave him the charge of the Jullundur Doab and Sultanpur only. The western part of the Punjab, including Dipalpur, was given to another Afghan noble, Alam Khan Lodhi, also called Ala-ud-din Lodhi. Daulat would not submit to this and, along with his son Ghazi Khan, decided to defy Babar and raised the standard of revolt. Daulat's youngest son Dilawar, however, did not join him. Babar found no difficulty in defeating Daulat Khan and Ghazi Khan who, after a feeble resistance, fled to the Shiwalik Hills. But their rebellion frustrated Babar's plans to march on Delhi and he thought it wise to return to Kabul and make fresh preparations for his final bid for the throne of Delhi.

1. See *Adi-Granth*, Rag Tilang

But before he left for Kabul, he had made the following settlement of the Punjab. Lahore was handed over to one of his Mughal Begg, Mir Abdul Aziz. Sialkot was entrusted to Khusrow Gokaltash, another Mughal noble. Dipalpur and its neighbouring territories were given to Alam Khan and the Jullundur Doab and Sultanpur, after the revolt of Daulat Khan, were given to his son Dilawar Khan. Dilawar was also asked to make a hot pursuit of his father and arrest him.

**Settlement of  
the Punjab**

Within a short period after Babar's departure, Daulat Khan came out of his retreat, attacked both Dilawar and Alam Khan, and defeated them. He also wrested some territory of Lahore from the Mughal Begg. He even defeated Ibrahim's forces which were sent to reassert his authority in the Punjab. Owing to these revolts and wars, great confusion prevailed in the Punjab. Alam Khan, after losing Dipalpur, fled straight to Kabul and persuaded the Mughal Padshah to undertake another invasion of India. He also requested Babar to help him in the recovery of the Punjab from his rival, Daulat Khan. The result of Alam's interview with Babar was that a secret treaty was signed between the two, according to which it was agreed that Babar should help Alam Khan to acquire the throne of Delhi and, in return, Alam Khan would allow Babar to retain the whole of the Punjab. The Mughal Padshah, consequently, gave letters to Alam in the names of the Mughal Begg serving in the Punjab, asking them to render every possible help to him in conquering Delhi. After getting assistance, thus, from the Mughal officials, Alam sought the aid of Daulat Khan also. The ambitious Daulat thought that the struggle between Ibrahim and Alam would weaken both of them and, thus, seeing his own personal gain in the game, he lent some of his soldiers to Alam Khan for his Delhi expedition. He even sent his two sons Haji Khan and Dilawar Khan with Alam Khan. Daulat's soldiers, instead of becoming an asset to Alam, became a liability and in the battle which was fought between Ibrahim and Alam, they worked for the defeat of the latter.

**Daulat Khan  
Comes Out of  
His Retreat**

With the defeat of Alam and the Mughal Begg, Daulat Khan became encouraged and drove out the Mughals from the Punjab. This defeat of Alam Khan and the Mughal Begg made Babar invade India for the fifth and last time.

He left Kabul in November 1525. On his way to Lahore, he reduced the turbulent tribes of Gakhars, Jats and Gujjars who, on account of frequent wars among the Mughal Beggars and Afghan nobles, had recovered their independence. When Babar reached Kalanaur, he learnt that Daulat Khan and his son Haji Khan had left Lahore and taken shelter in Malot, now in the Hoshiarpur District. He, therefore, marched there and besieged the fortress. Daulat Khan offered a tough resistance and it is said that he hung two swords on his sides and swore to fight Babar to the finish. But after some time, he felt exhausted and sent a message to the invader that he was ready to submit. Babar, thereupon, sent for him and he writes in his *Memoirs* that when Daulat Khan came before him, he hesitated in bowing, whereupon the Mughal officials pushed him and made him bow. Babar then said to the Afghan Chief, "I showed you more respect and reverence than you could have desired and expected. I delivered your tribe, your family and your women from the bondage of Ibrahim. The countries held by Tatar Khan, yielding 3 crores of rupees' worth of revenue, I bestowed on you, and what evil have I done you that you should come in style against me with these two swords by your side and, attended by an army, stir up tumult and confusion in my territories?" At last Daulat begged Babar to forgive him and the large-hearted Padshah forgave him. His *jagir* was restored to his family and he was sent to Bhera, where, after a short while, he died.

In the siege of Malot, Daulat Khan's son Ghazi Khan, whom Babar calls, a "traitorous coward" had escaped. After the defeat of Daulat Khan, a small force was sent against Ghazi, while Babar himself marched on Delhi. Ibrahim Lodhi also advanced to meet the Mughal invader, and on the historic field of Panipat, the fate not only of the Punjab but also that of the whole of India was decided in favour of Babar. Guru Nanak's patriotic heart felt great agony at this national dishonour and disaster at the hands of the Mughals and in one of his hymns, he says : "The dogs of Lodhis have spoiled the priceless inheritance; when they are dead, no one will regard them."

### C. Conclusions

From the above description of the Afghan-Mughal wars,



**Conclusions** we can safely draw the following conclusions in order to have a clear picture of the political condition of the Punjab at that time.

- (a) From 1500 to 1517, Sikandar Lodhi was the Sultan of Delhi and he, through his ability and tact, was able to give an orderly government to the people of the Punjab. But in 1517, when Ibrahim succeeded him, there occurred troubles in every part of his empire; and in the Punjab also, most serious troubles started. The Delhi Sultan failed to assert his authority over the Punjab.
- (b) From 1517 to 1523, Daulat Khan, the Governor of the Punjab, along with his sons Haji Khan and Ghazi Khan, dreamt to carve out an independent kingdom in the Punjab. He even invited Babar to invade India in the hope that after the defeat of Ibrahim, he might leave him as his deputy in the Punjab. But the intriguing and ambitious Daulat failed in his designs, as Babar, after the conquest of the Punjab, wanted to rule India by staying there. Daulat Khan perished in this struggle.
- (c) There was another Afghan noble, Alam Khan, alias Ala-ud-din Lodhi, an uncle of Ibrahim who also wanted to fish in the troubled waters. He wanted to sit on the throne of Delhi and in order to achieve that end, he sought the aid of Babar and then of Daulat Khan. But he, too, failed in his mission, as he suffered a very heavy defeat at the hands of Ibrahim.
- (d) It was Babar who took full advantage of the dissensions among the Afghans and finally succeeded in defeating Ibrahim and conquering Punjab and Delhi.

Thus, in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, there was only chaos in the Punjab. A three-cornered struggle was going on in which the principal participants were Babar, Ibrahim Lodhi, and the Afghan nobles, Daulat Khan and Alam Khan. In that struggle eventually, Babar came out successful. The intrigues and ambitions of Alam Khan and Daulat Khan, the inefficiency of Ibrahim Lodhi and the frequent invasions of Babar had made the Punjab "a hotbed of endless strife". Indubhushan Bannerjee says : "Shameless opportunism and unscrupulous greed seem to

have been the order of the day and the lighthearted manner in which pledges were given only to be broken, bespeaks of a moral decadence which was keeping pace only too well with the political disruption from which the country had been suffering." Nobody's life and property were safe under such conditions. Mass massacres, looting and burning of towns and cities were very common. Guru Nanak, who lived in the Punjab of those days, sums up the political condition of the Punjab in the following words, "The Kali Age is the knife the kings have turned butchers and men nowadays are men only in shape and name ; in action, they are mere dogs".

## II

### SOCIAL CONDITION

In the sixteenth century, the society in the Punjab, as in the rest of the Lodhi Empire, was split up into two main divisions—the Muslims who formed the ruling class of the day ; and the Hindus, who constituted the general masses. The Muslims were 'the favoured children' of the State. They were eligible for the highest office in the State and, simply because they professed the faith of the ruler, they were treated with consideration and respect. But that was not the case with the Hindus. They were regarded as *Zimmis* and had to pay a special tax, the *Jaziya*, simply because they were Hindus. They could get exemption from it only by embracing Islam. They had also to pay a pilgrim tax, when visiting their holy places, at the rate of a rupee and a quarter per head. They were also often threatened and coerced to embrace Islam. Sikandar Lodhi (1488-1517), the Emperor of Delhi, in the opening years of the sixteenth century, had further imposed several restrictions on the Hindus. The case of Bodhan Brahman illustrates the position of the Hindus at that time. The Brahman incidentally declared in the presence of some Mohammedans that the Hindu faith was as good as Islam. The Sultan took notice of it and, on the advice of the Muslim divines, asked Bodhan Brahman either to embrace Islam, or face death. The brave Brahman refused to change his faith and, consequently, was put to death. It is also said that Sikandar Lodhi issued an ordinance asking the barbers not to shave the

**Two Main Divisions—the Muslims and the Hindus**

**Inferior Position of the Hindus**

heads and beards of the Hindus in accordance with their usual customs. Abdullah, the author of *Tarikh-i-Daudi*, says that Sikandar<sup>1</sup> even destroyed the idols of the Hindus and gave their pieces to the butchers to make weights for selling meat. The same writer tells us that once the Sultan even planned to make a whole-sale massacre of the Hindus who had assembled at Kurukshetra near Thanesar in connection with the celebration of one of their festivals. But he did not perpetrate it, fearing its political consequences. Thus, the condition of the Hindus in the society of those days was nothing but pitiable. Every Hindu felt the pinch of the alien rule. The poll-tax, the pilgrim tax, public degradation in dress and demeanour, suppression of religious fairs and processions, etc. were some of the means adopted by the Government to exterminate the Hindu people. Indubhushan Bannerjee says that the Punjab "was particularly unfortunate in this respect. If the Muslim Government was firmly established anywhere, it was in the Punjab and the wave of proselytism had spread there with an overwhelming force"<sup>2</sup>.

The Muslims did not constitute one single class. They were divided into three subdivisions : the upper class, the lower middle class and the slaves. The upper class consisted of **Classes among the Muslims** Afghan Amirs, Sheikhs, Qazis and Ulemas. They held big fiefs and led a fairly high standard of life. In the periods of war, they generally remained busy in leading, organizing and planning expeditions, but in times of peace, they spent most of their time in 'Jashan' or social parties. They kept big harems and a large number of retainers and slaves. Whenever the ruler of Delhi was a strong man, they were generally submissive, but when they found him to be weak, they neglected the business of the State, and by fair or foul means tried to amass fortunes.

The lower class of the Muslims consisted of junior officials, soldiers, clerks and those who were engaged in trade and industry. There were very few Muslims who acted as labourers or tilled the soil. Though there was a very great difference between their standard of life and that of the upper class, yet they were quite well off. The necessities of life were cheap and abundant and they could get all the comforts of life within their small earnings.

1. The mother of Sikandar Lodhi was the daughter of a Hindu goldsmith. But despite that, he was a narrow-minded bigot and persecuted the Hindus.

2. Indubhushan Bannerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Vol. I, p. 43

In some respects, their lot was better than that of the Hindus of the upper class. The Hindus, however highly placed, were subjected to great humiliations at the time of the payment of *Jaziya*.

The lowest class among the Muslims consisted of slaves, eunuchs and servants. Their number was quite large because the Muslim king and his nobles kept a large number of slaves and retainers in their courts and harems. Even women slaves were kept and the general belief among the nobles was "Buy a Khurasani woman for her work, a Hindu woman for her capacity for nursing children, a Persian woman for the pleasure of her company and a trans-Oxonian for thrashing her as a warning for the other three". But in those days, slaves were generally manumitted and they could rise to any position. So, the position of the slaves was not "once a slave and always a slave".

Now, we come to the Hindus. Babar in his *Memoirs* says that the revenue officers, artisans and workers (also peasants) were mostly Hindus<sup>1</sup> and they constituted the general masses of those days. Their lot was hard. They did not enjoy the freedom of worship; and whenever there occurred a war between two Muslim groups of warriors—whether an Afghan was fighting against an Afghan or a Mughal was fighting against an Afghan—the Hindus suffered the most. Pyramids of their skulls were commonly raised "as they marched on in their victorious career from one place to another". Places of Hindu worship—the temples—were pulled down to satisfy their barbaric instincts. For example, the people of Sayyedpur, mostly Hindus, were murdered in thousands simply because the Afghans had resisted the Mughals. Similarly, when Babar advanced towards Lahore and there was some resistance on the part of the Hindustanis, the whole city of Lahore was looted and burnt. In times of peace also, the lot of those Hindus was no better. They acted as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' to their masters. Their standard of living was very poor and Babar who lived in the Punjab for some time in those days, thus describes the social life of the Punjabis of those days :

"They have no idea of the charms of friendly society, of frankly mixing together or of familiar intercourse. They have no genius, no comprehension of mind, no politeness of manner; they

1. *Babar's Memoirs*, I, p.281



have no good horses, no good flesh, no good fruits, no ice or cold water, no good food or bread in their bazaars, no baths or colleges, no candles, no torches, not a candlestick.

**Babar's Account** Instead of a candle and a torch, they have a gang of dirty fellows whom they call *Divatis*" (those who hold dirty earthen lamps or *Divas*). Their peasants and lower classes all go about naked. They tie a piece of cloth which they call *langoti*. Their women, too have a *lang*, one end of which they tie about their waist and the other they throw over their heads"<sup>1</sup>

Socially, the Hindus were divided into a number of castes and sub-castes. Nicoli Conti, an Italian traveller, tells us that the Hindus in those days were divided into eighty-four sub-castes. He writes : "Every tradesman has received his trade from his forefathers who for generations have all practised the same trade."<sup>2</sup>

**Division into Castes and Sub-castes**

Other contemporaneous Hindu writers also tell us that the caste was the basis of their society. But all of them are unanimous that the caste-system had become the great bane of the Hindu Society. The Brahmans exploited all other classes of the people. They had reduced the Hindu religion to a set of rites, formulae and ceremonies, and at the time of each ceremony and rite, they tried to extort money from their ignorant, superstitious and credulous followers. They advocated untouchability. They held that the touch of a 'Sudra' defiled the people of the upper castes. They did not even open their temples to the Sudras, for they argued that the doors of God were permanently closed for them. Thus, as Guru Nanak says in his *Majh ki War*, "*Dharama* has taken wing and vanished. Falsehood prevails like darkness and the moon of truth is not to be seen anywhere".

On account of the colossal ignorance of the masses, they were very superstitious. They led the life of blind conventionalism.

**Superstition and Empty Ritualism Had Taken the Place of Real Devotion**

Bhai Gurdas, a contemporary, says that "Alchemy and thaumaturgy were professed, incantations and spells practised and men indulged in strife, wealth and mutual jealousies." The form had completely supplanted the spirit, and the religions of both the Hindus and the Musalmans were completely hidden beneath a mass

1. *Babar's Memoirs* I, p. 240-41

2. *Babar's Memoirs* II, p. 241

of formalities and extraneous observances. Indubhushan Bannerjee says : “Tyrannies reigned supreme—the tyranny of the might, the tyranny of the forms and the tyranny of the names. The unity of God-head was lost in the worship of *Avtars* and divinities, *pirs* and *dargahs*, and pilgrimages ; and empty ritualistic practices had taken the place of real devotion of heart. Blind faith and superstition had driven truth away. The Hindus and the Muslims quarrelled ; the Brahmans and Mullahs wrangled ; social and political inequalities reigned rampant and there was strife, eternal strife, everywhere. All aspects of life, social, religious and political, presented the same spectacle”<sup>1</sup>

Besides, the position of women in those days was also very wretched. From the works of contemporaneous writers, such as Malik Mohammad Jaisi and Guru Nanak, we find that the evil of *purdah*, both among the Hindu and the Muslim women, was prevalent. Jaisi often talks of “Ghoonghat”. Women of upper class generally moved in closed litters or *dolis*, accompanied by male and female attendants. The poor women went about wrapped up in the long garments of *burqa*. ‘Sati’ was another great evil of those days. The Hindus of that time thought that a widow’s chastity and faithfulness to her husband lay in burning herself on his pyre. In the *Adi-Granth* of the Sikhs, there are scattered references which show that ‘Sati’ was a common evil among the caste Hindus of the Punjab in those days.

Regarding food, the upper classes of the Muslim society were very fond of ‘mushy’ dishes. The best table was that where a number of meat and sweet dishes were served. Spices and butter were used in large quantities to make the dishes tasty and delicious. At the time of feasts or ‘Jashans’, twenty to fifty dishes were served. The sweet ‘*Halwas*’ (puddings), *Zarda* and *Sharbat* were also popular recipes. The iced water in summer was not used till Akbar’s accession. The food of the lower Muslim classes consisted of bread and roasted meat—the *Kabab*—which they usually got from the public butcheries in the bazaars. The common diet of the general masses, of the Hindus was ‘*Khichri*’ or boiled rice and pulse, or bread, vegetables and pulses. The Hindus, as a rule, were vegetarians.

1. Indubhushan Bannerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Vol. I, p. 43

Though wine-drinking is forbidden in the *Koran*, yet it was a common evil of the day. Kanwar Mohammad Ashraf says, "It is difficult to mention any social group in the Muslim Society which did not drink. Even women in the Muslim Society indulged in drinking". Opium-eating was very common among the Rajputs. *Bhang* or leaves of hemp formed the favourite drug of the Hindu religious orders. Betel-chewing was a popular habit of the people. But the evil of smoking tobacco had not yet crept into the society of those days.

Habit of  
Drinking

### III

#### ECONOMIC CONDITION

Economically, the Punjab was a rich province. It was the granary of northern India and yielded about three crores of rupees as revenue to the Lodhi State. Babar in his *Memoirs* greatly praises the Punjab for abundance of wealth. He also speaks very highly of the skill of the artisans, and craftsmen whom he met in the Punjab and Delhi. But he was very much depressed to see the standard of living of the people. He says that the people moved in improvised dress—*lang* and *langoti*, and had no charm of social life. In agriculture and gardening also, they were backward. Irrigation with Persian wheels was not commonly known to them. On account of the frequency of wars, there prevailed a sense of insecurity and, consequently, trades and industries were not flourishing. In normal times, however, the Punjabi traders, particularly Multanis, carried on trade with the neighbouring Muslim countries. Horse-trade with Kabul was a popular occupation of the Punjabis of those times. There were no banks of modern type to give a fillip to trade and industries. But still there were a number of Hindu bankers in the big cities who, in times of peace, would advance money to merchants to carry on their business. But they charged exorbitant rates of interest. From the contemporaneous Afghan sources, however, we find that the necessities of life were very cheap, though not as cheap as they were in the days of Ala-ud-din Khilji. The two factors, *i.e.* the limited requirements of life and the cheapness of goods, did not make the people feel so much the pinch of poverty from which they suffered.

Economic Con-  
dition—Rich and  
Wealthy Punjab

### Books for further study

- I. King : *Babar's Memoirs*, Vol. I
- II. I.B. Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Vol. I
- III. Mohammad Ashraf : *Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan*
- IV. Mohammad Akbar : *The Punjab under the Mughals*
- V. Conningham : *History of the Sikhs*
- VI. Mohammad Latif : *History of the Punjab*
- VII. Narang G.C. : *Transformation of Sikhism*
- VIII. S.R. Sharma : *Mughal Empire*, Vol. I
- IX. *Ain-i-Akbari*
- X. *Bhai Gur Das's Waran*
- XI. *Adi-Granth of the Sikhs.*



# CHAPTER III

## BHAKTI MOVEMENT AND ITS SPREAD IN THE PUNJAB

Bhakti Dravar upji lāyā Ramanand uttar  
Pragat kiyo Kabir ne supta dueep nav khand.

(Bhakti was born in Dravida ; Ramanand took it to the North; Kabir spread it all over the world in its seven islands and nine *khands*.)

Originally, Hinduism was a great religion. Its philosophy and sublime doctrines had inspired not only the sages and seers of India, but also those of other countries. But, as is usual with all the religions, Hinduism, in course of time, degenerated greatly. It had limited the all-pervading God by putting Him into temples. Pilgrimages and mere rituals had taken the place of the devotion of the heart. Blind faith and superstition had driven the truth away. The Brahmans, for their own ends, had tightened the rules of the caste in such a way that a very large section of the Hindus had been cast aside as untouchables. Thus, towards the end of the Middle Ages, in the words of Sir Gokal Chand Narang, "the spring of religion had been choked up by weeds of unmeaning ceremonials, debasing superstitions, the selfishness of the priest, and the indifference of the people. Form had supplanted the reality and the highly spiritual character of Hinduism had been buried under the ostentatious paraphernalia of sects."<sup>1</sup> This degenerated Hinduism failed to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the bold and brave Hindu thinkers and, therefore, voices were raised from different quarters against perversions that had crept into their religion.

But so long as the Muslims had not settled in India, the voices of the reformers did not much attract the attention of the people.

With the advent of the militant and proselytizing Islam in India, however, a new and powerful challenge was thrown to Hinduism. Islam believed in the unity of God and emphasized the equality of

**Degeneration  
of the Hindu  
Religion & Need  
of Reform**

**Advent of Islam  
and Danger to  
Hinduism**

1. Sir G.C. Narang : *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 31

man. The proselytizing zeal of the Muslims, armed with these two doctrines, was bound to be successful in converting at least that section of the Hindus whom the Brahmans had cast aside as untouchables and whom they had deprived of even the elementary rights of freedom of association and freedom of worship.

This new menace made the Hindus feel that they must set their own house in order ; otherwise the bulk of their followers would go to the fold of Islam. They then studied the ancient scriptures and found that they could follow three different methods to reform and vitalize their religion. They are : (i) the 'Gyan' or knowledge method, (ii) the 'Karma' or action method and (iii) the 'Bhakti' or devotion method. The medieval Hindu reformers, who were seriously facing the menace of Islam, adopted the last method. With the doctrine or cult of 'Bhakti' they fought battles against the proselytizing zeal of Islam, the tyranny of the Brahmans and the rigours of the caste; and, to a great extent, with this single weapon, they came out victorious in this three-cornered struggle. Through the message of love, equality and peace, they succeeded in defending the most vulnerable parts of their social fabric from the attacks of Islam.

Some of the well-known leaders who adopted this cult of *Bhakti* to fight the Muslim menace and the Brahman tyranny are Ramanand, Kabir, Chaitanya and Guru Nanak. They all emphasized with the same sureness of accent the great panacea of the Name."<sup>1</sup> They differed here and there in details but all were unanimous in emphasizing the fundamentals of the '*Bhakti* doctrine' which, in brief, were the following :

(i) Emotional worship, *i.e.* chanting the hymns of the Lord in utmost devotion and, thereby, developing love for Him and His creation.

(ii) *Guru-Bhakti*, *i.e.* the adoration of the religious teacher or the guru who teaches man the great lessons of love and the secrets to win God's love.

(iii) Self-surrender or *Prapatti*, *i.e.* a man in love should have no will of his own. He should make a complete sacrifice of

1. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Volume I, p. 1

himself—his mind, body and possessions—in order to find communion with God, the object of his love.

All these *Bhakti* reformers, besides pointing out the positive aspects of their cult, exhorted their followers to renounce the following :

Negative Aspect

(i) *The rigidity of the caste-system*—To a man in love with God, all are equal and, so, none should be regarded as high or low.

(ii) *Emptiness of ritualism*—God, the True Beloved, is not pleased with a mere lip homage or mere performance of sacrifices. He wants intense and sincere love and not mere formalities, as he cannot be deceived.

(iii) *Idol and image worship*.—God dwells in the heart of man and not in an idol or in a temple. Even pilgrimages are useless.

(iv) *Sanctity of any particular language*.—God is not pleased with any special language. He understands only one language—the language of the heart.

In its earlier stages, this *Bhakti* cult was known as “*Ekantika Dharma*”. “According to Bhandarkar, it was so-called because its greatest emphasis was on single-minded love and devotion to one God.”<sup>1</sup> It was not any new doctrine. Rather, it was based upon the teachings of the *Bhagvad Gita*.

But it must be remembered that this *Bhakti* movement was not confined to any one particular part of the country. Nor did all the *Bhakti* reformers flourish at one and the same time. It was an all-India movement and the *Bhakti* cult was a very popular cult throughout the Middle Ages. It first appeared in southern India and its great advocates in the South were Shankaracharya, Ramanuj and Nam Dev. In Bengal, its chief exponents were Jaidev and Chaitanya, and in Uttar Pradesh, its powerful advocates were Ramanand and Kabir. Kabir’s teachings had found an echo in the Punjab; but actually the movement of *Bhakti* in this land of five rivers was led by Guru Nanak and his nine successors. (For details, see the separate chapter on Guru Nanak.) As the menace of the proselytizing zeal of Islam was much more serious in the

**Bhakti Movement an All-India Movement**

Punjab, Guru Nanak had to found an institution of 'Gurus' and through that, the message of *Bhakti*, love and devotion to God was given to the people of the Punjab for ten generations. This intense and organized propaganda of the *Bhakti* cult by the Sikh Gurus led to the formation of a well-known community of 'Bhakats' or 'Sikhs'. These Sikhs, on account of certain environmental factors, and on account of their open struggle against the Mughals could not and did not live strictly according to the orthodox *Bhakti* standards. But still some of

**Bhakti Move-  
ment in the Pun-  
jab—Sikh Gurus** the fundamentals of the Sikh creed are the same as advocated by the medieval *Bhakti* reformers. Thus, whereas in the other parts of India, the *Bhakti*

schools "developed more or less on traditional lines and after a short period of fruitful activity quieted down into narrow, hide-bound or, at best, mystical sects, Sikhism (in the Punjab) went off at a tangent and ultimately evolved what has been called a church-nation."<sup>1</sup> As stated elsewhere, the *Bhakti* movement originated in the South. Its first great exponent in the Deccan was Shankracharya, a Nambudari Brahman of the Malabar District. He was born at Kaladi, six miles from Alwaye, in A.D. 788. His father's name was Sivaguru and his mother's, Aryambha. Very little is known of the early career of Shankracharya. It is, however, said that while still young, he left his home, went to the Narbada

**Bhakti Move-  
ment in the  
Deccan** and became a disciple of Govinda Bhagvat-Pada, one of the celebrated saints of those times. It was from him that Shankracharya learnt the old Hindu Shastras and sacred books. After some-  
(I)  
**Shankracharya  
A.D. 788-820**

time, he left the Narbada and moved from place to place, expounding and advocating his famous 'Advaitya' philosophy which declares that the universe and Brahm (God) are one. According to him, all things in the world are emanated from Him or are part

**His Philosophy  
of Advaitya** of Him or must merge into Him. Elaborating it further, he argues that Self (Atma) and Brahm (God) are absolutely one and man in this life should strive to attain this unity. He was a great debater and, within a short time, succeeded in having a large number of followers. He enjoined upon his disciples to live on alms and always keep with them a staff and a water-pot. They were to

1. Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, I. p. 1



live in 'maths' or monasteries—away from the dust and din of the towns. Shankracharya, in his lifetime, founded four great 'maths' or 'piths' (monasteries), each of which became a centre of one of his most trusted disciples. The adherents of these four great disciples are generally called 'Dandis'; 'Sarda Pith' and 'Kamkoli pith' are the two most well-known 'Maths' of Shankracharya.

Some scholars, such as Dr Tara Chand, say that the extreme form of 'monism' in the teaching of Shankracharya might have been due to the influence of Arabs who used to come from Arabia and the Persian Gulf to the western coast of India for purposes of trade. But this view has not been universally accepted. Some writers say that monism is an ancient doctrine of Hinduism and Shankracharya must have learnt it from his great Hindu teacher Govind Bhagvat-Pada.

Shankracharya died in A.D. 820 while he was hardly thirty-two. But even in such a short time, he brought about a great revolution in the Deccan. It was the first bold attack on the perversions of the Puranic Hinduism. He was the first great reformer who, after several centuries, emphasized the real spirit of religion—the unity of God-head and the immanence of God. He is, thus, the pioneer of the *Bhakti* cult in India.

Shankracharya's message was further elaborated by Ramanuj who also lived in the Deccan and whose teachings exercised an even more profound influence on the minds of the people than those of his predecessor. Ramanuj was the son of Keshav Jajjama and Kantimati. He was born at Perumbhudur near Konjeveram in A.D. 1017. After getting religious instructions at Sri Rang Nath, he became a Vaishnavite. Lakshami and Narayan were the objects of his love and adoration. Narayan is a name of Vishnu, the Supreme Being, who existed before all worlds and is the Creator of all things. Lakshmi is His consort. Ramanuj held that the repetition of their sacred names and worshipping them with utmost devotion were the sure methods to attain freedom from the bondage of birth and death. It is generally said that his teachings were so popular that during his lifetime, he had won more than ten thousand disciples.

His teachings are contained in his well-known works, such

as *Siri Ramanuj Bhashya*, the *Gita Bhashya* and the *Dharma Samhita*. Ramanuj died at the ripe old age of 120 years in A.D. 1137. After his death, the doctrine of *Bhakti* was propagated in the Deccan by Vaishnava *Bhakats* such as Madhva, Vallabha and Desika. Although this *Bhakti* movement of southern India had no direct bearing on the *Bhakti* movement of northern India, yet it indirectly influenced the latter. When the Hindu reformers of northern India found themselves pitched against the proselytizing zeal of Islam, they thought that the only way to set their own house in order was to reform their own religion in the same way as Shankracharya and Ramanuj had done.

In Maharashtra, the *Bhakti* doctrine was preached by the Pandharpur saints and mystics. Some of the well-known figures of this Pandharpur movement were Dhaneshvar, Sena Narhari, Nam Dev, Eknath and Tukaram. Of all these, Nam Dev exercised the most profound influence on the *Bhakti* movement of northern India. He belonged to a low caste of tailors. His "Abhangs"—songs of devotional fervour—had a very popular appeal. Like other religious reformers, he also denounced idolatry and ritualism. The essence of his philosophy is that man must merge himself completely into the love of God. S. R. Sharma says, "There is only one favour he would ask of God: that we should always feel Him in our hearts, utter His name only with our tongue, see Him alone with our eyes. Our hands should worship Him only, our heads be placed at His feet alone and our ears hear only His praise."

Denouncing image worship and rituals, Nam Dev says, "A stone god and his mock devotee cannot satisfy each other. Such gods have been broken to pieces by the Turks or have been flung into water, and yet they do not cry." Further, "They pluck a living *Tulsi* plant to worship a dead stone...they kill a living ram to perform the sacrifice; they paint a stone with red lead, and women and children fall prostrate before it...People worship a serpent made of clay, but take up cudgels to kill a living one—all these are in vain." According to Nam Dev, the only thing of value is to utter the Name of God. Some of the hymns of Nam Dev are included in the *Adi-Granth* of the Sikhs.

In the North, the first great advocate of the *Bhakti* cult was Jaidev, the author of the immortal composition, *Gita Govind*.

**Jaidev—Gita Govind** Jaidev flourished in the twelfth century. He was one of the five celebrated poets or five jewels of Lakshman Sena of Bengal. Nabhaji, the author of the famous *Bhagatmal*, styles him as “an incarnation and treasury of melody”. His greatest work *Gita Govind* written in Sanskrit, is generally regarded as the Bible of the *Bhakti* cult. It is the greatest love poem describing the philosophy of devotion and love of God. Jaidev himself sums up the nature of his work in the following words :

“Whatever is delightful in the modes of music, whatever is exquisite in the sweet art of love, let the happy and the wise learn from this song of Jaidev.”

*Gita Govind* is a great religious allegory. The love scenes and the rhetorical graces of the poet are not to be understood in the sense that persons of evil minds and dispositions attach to them. Radhika, the heroine, is the heavenly wisdom. The milk-maids who divert Krishna from his allegiance to her are the senses of smell, sight, touch, taste and hearing. Krishna, represented as pursuing them, is the human soul which attaches itself to earthly pleasures. The return of Krishna to his first love is the return of the repentant sinner to God who gives joy in heaven. The Sikh Gurus found the philosophy of Jaidev to be quite identical with their own teachings and so included two hymns of Jaidev in their sacred book, the *Adi-Granth*.

But the chief exponent of the *Bhakti* cult in Bengal was Chaitanya Maha-Prabhu. He is generally described as the founder of Bengal Vaishnavism. He was born in a learned Brahman family of Nadia in 1485. In 1510, he renounced the world and became a *Sadhu*. A period of six years was then spent by him in making tours in different parts of the country. Most of his time, during this period, was spent at Vrinda-Van, where he developed an intense love for Lord Krishna. Thereafter, he came and settled at Puri where he remained till his death which occurred in 1533.

Like other *Bhakti* reformers, Chaitanya too laid great emphasis on the worship of God's Name and on singing the hymns in praise of God with devotion. He exhorted his followers to deve-

lop devotional attitude towards the Lord; and he also told that the easiest way to develop such an attitude was to repeat and sing His Name. "Love for Lord Krishna" was the watch-word of Chaitanya's creed; and we can sum up Chaitanya's philosophy in the following words :

"The individual soul can attain to Krishna, the Supreme Lord by *Bhakti* and *Bhakti* alone. The highest stage which the individual can attain is to indulge in eternal sports with his Lord as a lover and His beloved. Radha is nothing but the individual soul, immersed in an ocean of rapturous love for the great Lord. She is nothing but idealized love. To love Krishna eternally as a servant, as a friend, as a son and lastly, as a lover, is the highest goal of man."<sup>1</sup>

Chaitanya also denounced the caste-system and like other *bhagats* proclaimed the universal brotherhood of man. His teachings were largely popular in Bengal and Orissa and his followers are known as "Vaishnavas" of Bengal. They are, however, not as organized as the followers of the ten Sikh Gurus who preached the message of *Bhakti* in the Punjab.

Another great *Bhagati* reformer of northern India was Ramanand. Dr Tara Chand describes him as "the bridge between the *Bhagati* movement of the South and of the North."<sup>2</sup> Ramanand was a Gour Brahman. He was born at Mailkot. We cannot definitely say when he was born. The general belief is that he flourished in the end of the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century.<sup>3</sup> He adopted most of the theological tenets of Ramanuj which he had learnt from one of Ramanuj's disciples, Reghwanand. But Ramanand did not follow the teachings and philosophy of Ramanuj blindly. He laid greater emphasis on devotion to God and on the simplification of worship. Besides, instead of the worship of Lakshmi and Narayan, he substituted the worship of Sita and Rama who were far more familiar to the people of Banaras and its neighbouring area than Lakshmi and Narayan.

1. Ishwari Prashad : *Medieval India*, p. 586

2. Tara Chand : *Influence of Islam on Indian culture*, p. 143

3. Bhandarkar says that he was born in 1299. Farquhar says that he was born in 1400 and died in 1477,



Ramanand also did not subscribe to the observance of strict culinary rules<sup>1</sup> on which Ramanuj had laid great emphasis. The

**Ramanand** greatness of Ramanand lies in the fact that none before him had denounced the caste as vehemently as he did. One of the famous *dohas* on his lips was :

“Jat pāt puchchai nahi koi  
Hari ko bhaje so hari kā hoi”,

‘i.e. no one should ask a man his caste. If a man is devoted to God, he becomes God’s own.’

He also admitted disciples of all castes to his order and told them that the love of God emancipated man from all social bondage. He insisted that his disciples should eat and drink together, irrespective of their birth. He even challenged the sacrosanct position of the Brahmans, the caste to which he himself belonged. He said that a low-caste man who loved God was superior to a Brahman who possessed no love for the Creator.” He even quoted ancient Shastras in support of his teachings.

Ramanand’s teachings were, to a certain extent, identical with the teachings of the Sikh Gurus and, so, one of his hymns is found included in the Basant Rag of the *Adi-Granth*. This hymn, in English translation reads thus : “I was proceeding to worship God in a temple, when my spiritual guide showed me God in my heart.” Ramanand died at an advanced age at Banaras. His disciples are divided into two sects—the Nagas who practise seclusion, and Samayogis who lead a married or *Grihastha* life. But it was not these sects, but his *Bhaktas* (those who derived personal inspiration from him) who carried his message of *Bhakti* to every nook and corner of India. Some of the famous among them were Pipa, Sain, Dhanna, Ravidas and Kabir.

**His Teachings  
and Disciples**

Of all the disciples of Ramanand, Kabir was the most famous and popular. He was born in 1398. It is a matter of controversy

1. Ramanuj had enjoined upon his followers an utmost attention to cleanliness in dress, cooking and eating. He insisted that his followers should wear a certain type of dress, follow a fixed type of salutation and eat in privacy. One of his important injunctions was : ‘If the sight or shadow of any person fell upon the food of his follower, he was not to take that food’. He held that the purity of thought could only be acquired by eating food not seen by others. Ramanand did not have faith in any of the above rules,

whether Kabir was a Hindu or a Musalman. According to one tradition, Kabir was the son of a Brahman widow who left him on the Lahar Lake whence he was picked up by a Muslim weaver, Niru, who took the child home and gave him to his wife Nima.

She nursed him with great affection and care. The **Birth of Kabir:** Marathi poet, Mahipathi, however, says that Kabir **A.D. 1398** was not born of a woman at all. He was the reincarnation of the ancient Rishi, Shuk, and was born out of a shell floating in the River Ganges. A Muslim weaver who was washing clothes on the banks of the river, heard a strange voice of 'Ram' from the shell and so took it. As he opened the shell, he found a beautiful baby boy in it. He took him home and began to call him 'Kabir' or the Great One.

Kabir's boyhood was spent in Banaras. He took no interest in his family trade, *i. e.* weaving and used to spend most of his time in chanting Rama's name. He became the disciple of Ramanand. When he grew up, his parents married him to a girl, named Loi, who gave birth to two children—Kamal and Kamali. But his married life did not deflect Kabir from his love for the Lord. His interest continued to be centred on God and he used to spend all his time in repeating His name. In his *dohas* or verses, he condemns rituals, dogmas, pilgrimages and the evils of the caste-system. He exhorts his followers to purify their minds. According to him, God is not to be found in temples and idols. He is omnipresent and one can see Him, if one's heart is pure. Kabir has "an aversion to theological subtleties and condemns all shams, insincerity and hypocrisy which are mistaken for true piety". He also denounces lip homage and idol worship. He tells his followers not to waste time in finding out God in the idol or in the temple, as He dwells only in a pure heart. In his *dohas* he says :

"Oh servant where dost thou seek me ?  
Lo ! I am beside thee.  
I am neither in Kaba, nor in Kailash ;  
Neither am I in rites nor in ceremonies,  
Nor in yoga, nor in renunciation ;  
If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once see me ;  
Thou shalt meet me in a moment."

Kabir says, "Oh Sadhu, God is the breath of all breaths". At another place, he expresses the same views :

“It is not by fasts and by repeating the prayer and the creed that one goeth to heaven ;

The inner veil of the temple of Mecca is in man's heart, if the truth be known.”

Like other *Bhakti* reformers, he denounces the caste-system and the sacrosanct position of the Brahmans in the Hindu society. He condemns the arrogance and the tyranny of the Brahmans. He says that although he belongs to the low caste of weavers, yet he is much nearer the throne of the Lord than any high-born Brahman. He also denounces the worship of idols and assails the authority of the Vedas, Shastras and the Koran. The essence of his teachings is that a man should strive continually for inward purity. Kabir personifies the creation of the world as ‘Maya’ or a woman prolific of deceit and illusion and, thus, denounces weakness or proneness to evil.

Kabir is the most cosmopolitan of all the teachers of medieval India and Macauliffe says that “his *dohas* can be accepted by all types of persons and, if pursued without bigotry, are advantageous for the salvation of all persons whether belonging to the Hindu or the Muslim faith.”<sup>1</sup> A.C. Banerjee's estimate about Kabir is that “he was the first leader of the medieval Reformation to make a conscious effort for Hindu-Muslim unity in the sphere of religion.” Kabir says that the Hindus and the Turks are the pots of the same clay and are striving by different routes to reach the same goal.

Kabir is said to have lived for about 120 years. He died at Maghar in about 1518. Grierson says that when he died, he was one hundred and nineteen years, five months and twenty-seven days old. The story of his death is narrated in the following manner : Up to the last, Kabir lived at Banaras ; but when he saw that his end was near, he shifted to Maghar. The general belief of the Brahmans of those days was that if a man died at Maghar, he could not get salvation. Kabir wanted to show to the world that every place was God's place, and so one should not be superstitious about anything. He, therefore, told his followers that Maghar was

**Death of Kabir  
at Maghar :  
A.D. 1518**

1. See Macauliffe . *Sikh Religion*, Vol, VI, p. 126

as sacred to him as Banaras and so he shifted to that place and died there. According to tradition, Kabir's body, after his death, was not traceable.

Kabir is one of the most popular saints of medieval times. Though his disciples, the Kabir Panthis, are not as organized as the Sikhs, yet his hymns have a very strong appeal. His *dohas* touch the mind straight and one feels like giving up all worldly pleasures at the altar of the Lord's love. An other beauty of his

hymns is that they are written in simple Hindi. A man of ordinary understanding can easily grasp the meanings of his writings. His hymns are found in "Kabir Bijak" and the *Adi-Granth* of the Sikhs. Dr Barnett, summing up the nature of Kabir's teachings, says that "it is a broad monistic pantheism coloured by a warm moral fervour."

Of all the *Bhakti* reformers, Kabir influenced Sikhism most profoundly. Guru Nanak is said to have often quoted Kabir's hymns while spreading the *Bhakti* message in the Punjab. A large number of his hymns were included in the *Adi-Granth*, the sacred book of the Sikhs. Many of Kabir's expressions found in the *Holy Granth*, are daily recited by most of Guru Nanak's followers.

In the Punjab, the *Bhakti* movement was led by Guru Nanak and after his death, by his nine successors. Guru Nanak lived in the time of the Lodhis and the first two great Mughal Emperors. His teachings breathe the same *Bhakti* spirit as is found in those of Jaidev, Ramanand, Chaitanya and Kabir. Like them, he emphasized the importance of Name in the path of God-realization. Guru Nanak's emphasis on "Guru-Bhakti" or adoration of the

Guru, self-surrender and purity of mind is in line with the basic principles of the *Bhakti* cult. His denunciation of the caste-system and the emptiness of rituals was not something new. The *Bhakats* in other parts of India had also denounced these institutions and practices as vehemently as was done by Guru Nanak.

But Guru Nanak's movement in the Punjab differed from other *Bhakti* schools of India in many ways. In the first instance, no Hindu teacher before Guru Nanak had pointed out so empha-



tically the futility of asceticism as Guru Nanak did. Guru Nanak wanted his disciples to lead a householder's life in piety. Ascetics were not even admitted to the Sikh fold and after his death, his son Baba Siri Chand, and his followers, the Udasis, were not regarded as the true followers of Guru Nanak. Secondly, no reformer before Nanak had founded a regular institution of Guruship for the propagation of the *Bhakti* doctrine. Guru Nanak established an institution of Guruship and through that preached the message of *Bhakti* for as many as nine generations. Thirdly, other *Bhakats* did not try to dislodge Sanskrit from the position of being the sacred language of the Hindus, although most of them had composed their works in their own vernaculars. The Sikh Gurus greatly emphasized the Punjabi language to the exclusion of Sanskrit. This exclusion of Sanskrit from the Sikh religion, according to A.C. Banerjee, has deprived the people of wider appeal of Sikh tenets, as Punjabi is not understood in all parts of India. Fourthly, no *Bhakti* school in other parts of India had ever questioned the sanctity of the Hindu divinities, *Avtars* and heroes, as described in the *Puranas*. But Guru Nanak and his successors repudiated their faith in the Puranic mythology. Of course, they used some Puranic similes in their compositions; but they never held faith in the Puranic heroes and *Avtars*. Fifthly, 'God' of the Sikh Gurus is different from 'God' of earlier *Bhakats*. The Sikhs' God is 'Nirankar' (without body) and not 'Chidakar' (with spiritual body). He is not anthropomorphous (*i.e.* having human shape and appearance). He is not Vithoba, Krishna or Rama, but a formless and timeless Being. Some writers say that Kabir's favourite and deity 'Ram' was not the 'Ram' of Puranic mythology but the Transcendent and Immanent God. But even then Kabir's Ram is not identical with the 'Akal Purakh' (The Timeless Being) of the Sikh Gurus.

Thus, the *Bhakti* movement or Sikhism in the Punjab stands distinguished from the other *Bhakti* schools of thought. Most of the other *Bhakti* sects 'could not rid themselves of, and soon reverted to, mythology and traditions.' And, thus, in course of time, they were more or less merged into Hinduism. Sikhism stood apart. Indubhushan Banerjee, therefore, says, "Bhakti schools in other parts of India, after short periods of fruitful activity, quieted down into narrow or, at best, mystical sects, but Sikhism went off at a tangent and ultimately evolved what has been called a 'church-

nation’.”

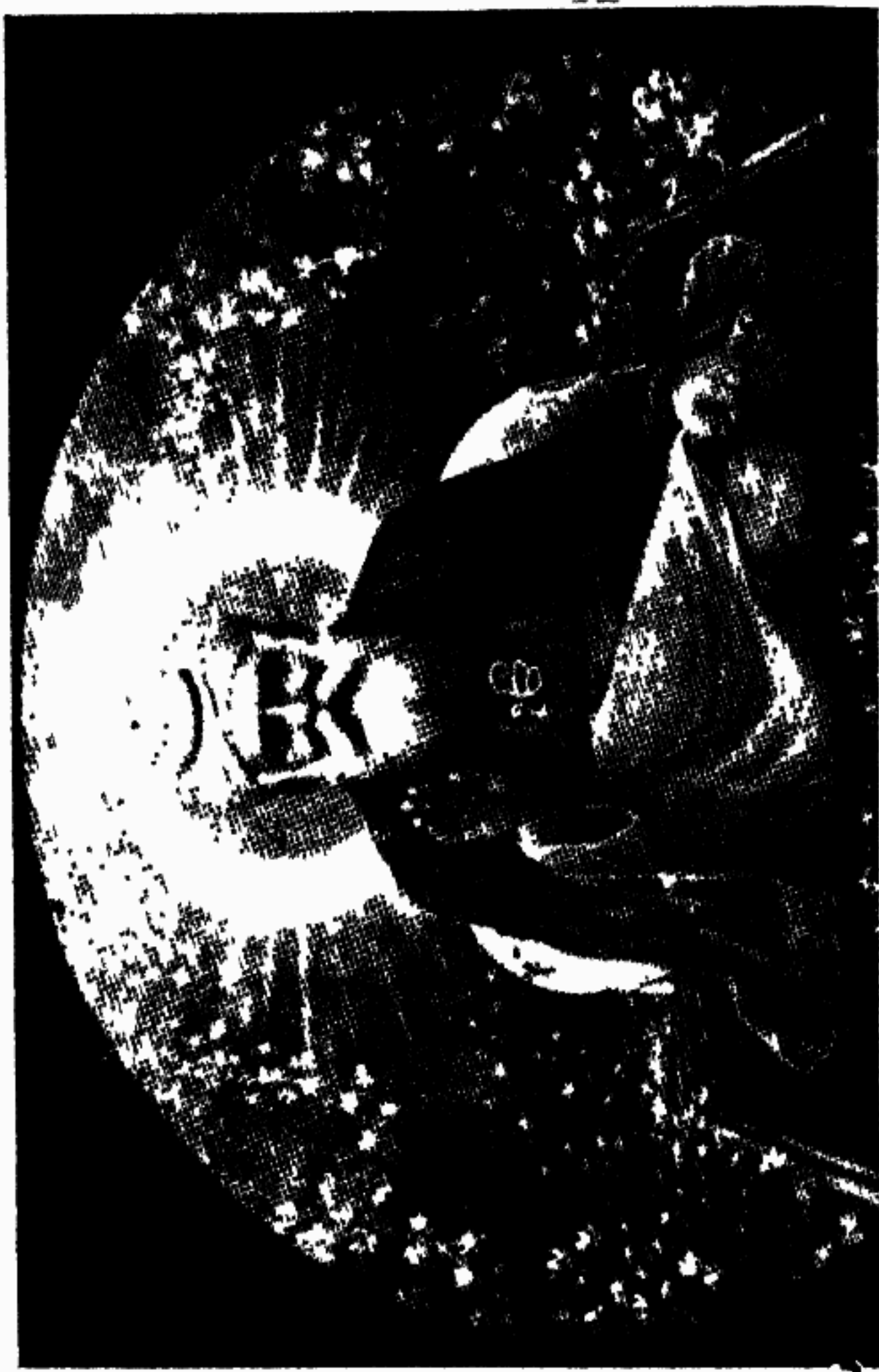
Although Sikhism in the Punjab embodies the *Bhakti* cult, it differs in certain details from other *Bhakti* schools of thought. In fundamentals, it belongs to the great family of popular religions which flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and which propagated the doctrine of *Bhakti*. It is why the fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan, gave a very prominent place to Kabir’s hymns while compiling the *Adi-Granth*. The hymns of Kabir, Nam Dev, Jaidev and other *bhakats* have been included in the *Sikh Granth* because they were found to be identical with the Sikh doctrine. Macauliffe does not seem to be right when he says that the author of the *Sikh Granth* included the hymns of the *bhakats* simply to give the readers an idea of the historical development of the Sikh reformation. The identity of the teachings of the *bhakats* and of the Sikh Gurus can be clearly illustrated from the study of the Gurus’ hymns and those of Kabir. Some of the Gurus’ expressions in the *Adi-Granth* are not merely identical, but almost the same as those uttered by Kabir. For example, ‘*Sutak* will enter our kitchen’ is also found in Kabir’s *Gauri*. “To conquer the mind is to conquer the world” is found in Guru Nanak’s *Japji* as well as in Kabir’s, *Maru*. “without the True Guru, they shall not find the way” occurs in ‘*Var Asa*’ of Guru Nanak, and this statement also occurs in Kabir’s *Basant*.<sup>1</sup>

### Important Books for Further Study

1. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Vols. V and VI
2. Ishwari Parshad : *Medieval India*
3. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : *A Short History of the Sikhs*
4. G. C. Narang : *Transformation of Sikhism*
5. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Vol. I
6. A. C. Banerjee : *Anglo-Sikh Relations*—Introduction
7. Carpenter : *Theism in Medieval India*
8. Sir J.N. Sarkar : *Chaitanya*
9. S. R. Sharma : *Maratha History Re-examined*

1. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 31







## CHAPTER IV

### BABA NANAK AND HIS TEACHINGS

A.D. 1469—1538

“Bābā Nanak Shah faqir  
Hindu kā guru Musalman kā pir”.

#### I. INTRODUCTION

We have seen in the previous chapter that a number of Hindu religious teachers or *bhaktas* made their appearance in different parts of India in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries and protested against caste distinctions, conventionalism and the emptiness of rituals which were the dominant features of the Hindu religion and society of those days. They urged the people to practise devotion and lead a life of purity. The echo of their teachings had reached the Punjab, but it had not had much affect on the life of the Punjabis. There, then appeared in the Punjab a great *bhakt* in the person of Guru Nanak or Baba Nanak whose message of love and sincere devotion transformed the life of millions. Guru Nanak, thus, belonged to the great family of the medieval religious reformers, and like Ramanand, Kabir and Chaitanya, he preached the message of love and truth “and emphasized with the same sureness of accent the great panacea of Name”.<sup>1</sup>

Guru Nanak is one of the greatest sons of the Punjab and, in fact, every Punjabi, may he be a Hindu, a Muslim or a Sikh, is proud of him. Most of the Punjabis and Sindhis ascribe even divinity to him. His followers, out of devotional attitude, take him to be identical with God. John Clark Archer says that there are two Nanaks—the factual and the formless. “He was an historic person. He is also a theological construction. He is what India and the world in general think he is ; he is also what Sikhs think of him. He is a historico-theological figure to them—a real person

Guru Nanak—  
Pride of the  
Punjab. Nanak  
‘Factual’ and  
‘Formless’

1. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Vol. I, p. 1

and also a creature of religious fancy.”<sup>1</sup>

In view of this dual conception of the Guru's personality, it is very difficult for a student of history to depict a true picture of his life. The task becomes much more difficult when he has to depend on only one-sided evidence—the Sikh tradition and the legends. The Muslim and the Hindu writers of Guru Nanak's times tell very little of him, and so we have to rely exclusively on the *Janam Sakhis*, the *Sikh jatakas*, containing the life-stories of Nanak and written by his disciples or Sikhs.

## II. CAREER OF GURU NANAK

Writing about Guru Nanak's birth, Bhai Gurdas writes, “Whenever there is a decline of *Dharma* and the rise of *Adharma*, a deliverer takes birth for the relief of the pious and for the destruction of the sinners.” The

Birth of Guru Nanak

Punjab, on the eve of Guru Nanak's birth, presented a gloomy picture. There was all darkness, there were ignorance and endless strife. It was time for the Lord to create a great man ‘for the relief of the pious and for the destruction of the sinners.’ Guru Nanak, thus, came as a saviour of mankind. He was born in 1469 at the village of Talwandi, now called Nankana Sahib,<sup>2</sup> in the West Punjab. The *Janam Sakhis* of Guru Nanak do not agree on the exact date of his birth. According to the *pratan Janam Sakhi*, he was born on the third day of the light-half of the month of Baisakh, *i.e.* sometime in the middle of April 1469.<sup>3</sup> One of the *Janam Sakhis*, however, says that he was born on the full-moon (Purnima) of Kartik, *i.e.* sometime in October or November 1469. By convention, the Sikhs celebrate their Master's birthday in Kartik, *i.e.* October-November.

The name of Guru Nanak's father was Mehta Kalu Chand, a

1. Archer : *The Sikhs*, p. 57. Archer says that Sikhs regard Nanak as ‘Niran-kari’ or the formless. But Bhai Jodh Singh says that Nanak is never regarded as formless. The Guru, according to the Sikh view, is never regarded as God, but is one with Him. See his book *Gurmat Nirnai*.

2. Some say that though the father of Guru Nanak lived at Talwandi, the boy Nanak was born at Kana, 16 miles south of Lahore.

3. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion* V. 1, p. 1 ; Khushwant Singh : *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, p. 30

**Bedi Khatri.** He was a petty trader<sup>1</sup>, living in the small village of Talwandi, about forty miles from Lahore. The name of Nanak's mother was Tripta who, according to Sikh tradition, was extremely devoted to her son. There are different versions why the son of Kalu and Tripta was named Nanak. According to one source, Tripta, before the birth of her son, had gone to her father's house at Kahna Kachha and Guru Nanak was born in his maternal grandfather's house. A maternal grandfather in Punjabi is styled as "Nana" and hence he was named Nanak. There are, however, others who say that this name was suggested by the family priest Hardayal after a study of the child's horoscope. The priest had told the parents of the child that "Nanak" was the divine and auspicious name. There are still others who say that Guru Nanak's elder sister's name was Nanaki and the brother was named after her.

As is common with the disciples of all great prophets and saints to associate their Master's birth with a number of miracles, the Sikhs also say that a number of supernatural events occurred when Guru Nanak was born. Just on the eve of his birth "unbeaten sounds of the Lord were heard at the gateway" and when he was actually born, "six ascetics, nine *Naths*, fifty-two 'Birs', sixty-four 'Yognis', eighty-four 'Sidhis' and thirty-three crores of gods came to pay him their homage". The family priest Hardayal and the midwife Daultan, on seeing the child, predicted that he would "carry the umbrella", and "enjoy the acclaim of the hosts of heaven and the men of earth and would be worshipped both by the Hindus and the Muslims."

The child Nanak was certainly not a common child. We are told that from the start, he was very much given to contemplation. He would not while away his time with children of his own age. He ate but little and it was felt by all that he had a contemplative turn of mind. When he was seven years old, he was sent to the village school. There is a controversy whether he was sent to a Hindu teacher or a Muslim one. According to the Sikh

**Guru Nanak's Education**

1. Some writers say that Guru Nanak's father was a cultivator. The Sikh traditions say that he was a village accountant or *Patwari*. Some say that he was a salt-merchant.

tradition, both the Hindu and Muslim teachers tried to instruct Nanak but to each of them, he said, "To your accomplishments, I prefer the study of divine knowledge." Guru Nanak, therefore, learnt much more from the ascetics and anchorites who visited Talwandi and its neighbouring forests than from his Muslim or Hindu teacher of the school. He also learnt a good deal from his own undisturbed communions with Nature, with his own soul and with the Creator. Thus, while he was still a boy, the inward struggle had started in his mind to find out a path to realize the supreme bliss. He expressed the views of his inner self when he was only nine years old and when his parents tried to invest him with the sacred thread. He told the people gathered there that it was futile to wear the sacred thread so long as a man was a victim of his passions. He, therefore, wanted to wear the thread of divine love by which he could have a full control over his senses.

Guru Nanak's father was deeply distressed to see the other-worldly nature of his son. In order to turn away his thoughts from that side, he tried him in various vocations. At first, he sent him to herd the buffaloes, but there too, he would spend more time in looking after his own soul than in looking after the cattle. Next, he tried him on the land, but there, too, he would not put his mind to the work. At last, he tried to put him in some trade. One day, Kalu gave him twenty rupees and bade him to go and trade with the money and make profit. Nanak proceeded to Chuharkānā, a small market in the neighbourhood. On his way to the market, he came across a group of *faqirs* who had not taken any food for several days. Nanak at once spent all the money he had on their food and returned home to tell his father that he had made the best use of money (*i.e.* had transacted a *sacha sauda*). Nanak was severely punished. This incident in Nanak's career is known as *Sacha Sauda* or the 'True Bargain' incident.

But Nanak's heart was fixed on God's love and any punishment or admonition did not deflect him from His love. He showed complete disinclination to engage himself in any secular work and passed more and more of his time in meditation.

Nanak's father, Kalu, then thought that the only way to turn his son's mind to worldliness was to marry him. At last, a match was found in the person of Sulakhni, the daughter of one Mula, a resident of Batala in the Gurdaspur District and he was married

**Guru Nanak's  
Father, Kalu,  
Tries His Son  
in Various  
Vocations and  
Fails**



at the age of fourteen.<sup>1</sup> In course of time, he begot two sons, Siri Chand and Lakhmi Dass. But, despite the responsibilities of married life, Guru Nanak did not forget his mission. He continued to spend most of his time in the company of ascetics and *dervishes* who were found in the neighbourhood of his village. Kalu, then, asked his brother Lalu to persuade Nanak to attend to his duties, but he too failed to effect any change in Nanak's mind. At last, Nanak's father decided to send him to Sultanpur where his daughter's husband, Jai Ram, was holding a high office under Nawab Daulat Khan, the *Faujdar* of the place. As Nanak knew Persian, Jai Ram secured for him the job of a store-keeper in the State granary.

For some time, Guru Nanak worked as a store-keeper in Daulat Khan's granary. He discharged his duties remarkably well. He soon earned the reputation of being one of the most honest servants of the State. But Guru Nanak had not come to this world to lead a common householder's life. He had come with a mission and so it was here that he received the great call from the Divine Father. According to the Sikh tradition, one day early in the morning Guru Nanak went to take a bath in the 'Baen' (a small river) in the neighbourhood of Sultanpur, which is nowadays called 'Kali Baen'. God appeared to him in a vision and reminded him of the purpose for which he had been sent to the world. It is said that Guru Nanak remained for three days at the place where he had seen that vision. At last, the Lord bles-

**Guru Nanak as Store-keeper at Sultanpur. Inward struggle of Nanak and His 'Enlightenment'**

sed him and said "I am with thee. I have made thee happy and also those who shall take thy name. Go and repeat My Name and cause others to do likewise. Abide uncontaminated in the world. Practise the repetition of My Name, charity, ablutions, worship and meditation. I have given thee

this cup of nectar, a pledge of my regard." The Guru then bowed down with respect and the primal Brahm showed him His sove-

1. Macauliffe says that he was married at the age of 18, whereas Bhai Mani Singh says that he was married when he was only fourteen.

reignty. Thus, Nanak was enlightened.<sup>1</sup> According to Indubhushan Banerjee, this great incident took place when he was twenty-five years old, *i.e.* sometime in 1494. But Khushwant Singh says that it took place in 1499.

After the enlightenment, Guru Nanak returned to Sultanpur, but his friends and relatives found him a completely changed man.

**Renunciation** He began to lead a secluded life, and if anyone insisted that he should at least speak something, he would only utter the following words. "There is no Hindu and no Musalman." People could not understand the significance of the words by which he wanted them to know that they were "men" first, and Hindus and Muslims afterwards. They should understand the 'divinity in man' and thus attain the supreme bliss and not fight for mere labels of 'Hindus' and 'Muslims'.

But not understanding what Nanak was saying, the people of Sultanpur<sup>2</sup> took him to be mad or crazy. Some of his friends even called a physician and an expert in charms to cure him, but all in vain. Little did they know that Nanak was no longer an ordinary man, but had become an enlightened guru who had in his possession the wonder cure of the world's ills. In the course of a few days, Nanak resigned his job, donned a religious garb and renounced the world.

With the renunciation of Guru Nanak begins an important phase of his career when he undertook arduous and extensive tours towards the north, south, east and west and visited important centres of Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. His travels cover a period of nearly thirty years. The first tour was undertaken

**Udasis or  
Travels of Guru  
Nanak—the First  
Tour** immediately after he left Sultanpur. With a 'saffron mark' on his forehead, a conical or *Qalandar's* turban on his head and a garland of bones round his neck, Guru Nanak accompanied by his faithful disciple Mardana, who sang his master's songs to the accompaniment of a rebeck or *rabbab* (guitar), set out on his mission. First,

**Sayyidpur  
(Eminabad)-Con-  
version of Lalo—  
The First Manji**

1. I. Banerjee, relying mostly on the evidence of Mohsan Fani says that Guru Nanak made a rapid progress towards spiritual enlightenment because of his association with a Muslim *Darvesh*, Murad. But the Sikh tradition and the hymns of Guru Nanak leave no doubt that Nanak had no guru except God and he attained the supreme bliss without the help of any human intermediary.

2. Some say that this event took place at Talwandi and not at Sultanpur.

he visited Sayyidpur, the present Eminabad, in the Gujranwala District (West Punjab), and by his teachings converted a carpenter, Lalo by name, who was thus given the honour to be the first disciple of Guru Nanak. It is said that Guru Nanak, during his stay at Sayyidpur (Eminabad), was invited by Malik Bhago, the Chief of the town, to a *Brahm-Bhoj* (feast), but the former declined the invitation on the ground that his food was not worthy of being taken, as it had not been obtained by honest labour. Guru Nanak, on the other hand, blessed Lalo because he earned his living by dint of hard labour. After staying for a few days at Eminabad, Guru Nanak appointed Lalo as the head of his disciples in that area and thus the first "Manji" or missionary centre was established by him.

According to the Sikh tradition, Guru Nanak next moved to Talumba, near Multan, where he converted a leader of the thugs, named Sajjan. The latter used to pose as a holy man and even maintained a temple for the Hindus and a mosque for the Mohammedans. He gave shelter to the travellers and then used to rob them at night, kill them and throw their bodies into a secret well. When Guru Nanak and Mardana visited his place, he tried to play the same trick on them. But while conversing with Guru Nanak, his heart was touched and he became a devotee of the Guru. The Guru then built a small *Dharamshala* or temple at that place and instructed Sajjan that there the Name of the Lord be worshipped. Thus, as Teja Singh says, "the criminal's den became a temple for God worship."

**Talumba—Conversion of Sajjan Thug—First Sikh Temple**

Guru Nanak next visited Kurukshetra, near Thanesar. A large number of Hindus, Brahmans, saints and *faqirs* had gathered there. But the Guru surprised them all when he began to cook a deer which one of his devotees had presented to him. The Brahmans expressed their horror at the sight of flesh, particularly on the occasion of a solar eclipse. But Guru Nanak silenced them by saying that there was nothing wrong in it. One should not bother about what one ate and how one lived. One should care more for inward purity—love, truth and honesty—than for these minor things.

**Kurukshetra**

From Kurukshetra, Guru Nanak proceeded to Hardwar where

again through a homily<sup>1</sup> he told the people that it was futile to believe that anything could reach their ancestors after they were dead and gone. The only thing that one should do was that during one's lifetime, one should practise devotion and lead a righteous life. Thence, he visited Panipat and there he is said to have converted Shaikh Sharaf to his point of view and the latter then kissed his hand and feet. He also visited Delhi and it is said that there he restored to life a dead elephant of Ibrahim Lodhi.

**Hardwar**

Guru Nanak's first tour was restricted to places in the Punjab and its neighbouring area. He journeyed on and arrived at Banaras and met one of the leading Brahmans, Chatur Dass. After

**Banaras and  
Nanakmata**

a long controversy, Chatur Dass recognized the truth of Nanak's message and became his devotee. From Banaras, the Guru and his minstrel Mardana proceeded to Gorakhmata, now called Nanakmata<sup>2</sup> which was a great centre of the *Jogis*, the followers of Gorakhnath. There, the Guru urged the *Jogis* or *Sidhas* to change their mode of life. He told them that religion did not consist in wearing a patched coat or in smearing the body with ashes, or in the blowing of the horn. They should rather live in the world. His message was : "Abide pure amid the impurities of the world". The *Jogis* were greatly impressed with the sincerity and devotion of the Guru and paid him great homage.

From Nanakmata, Guru Nanak and Mardana proceeded to Gaya, a great centre of the Buddhists. There, too, the Guru gave his message and impressed all who came in contact with

**In Kamrup, Nur-  
Shahi Tries to  
Tempt Nanak  
but Fails**

him. It is said that Guru Nanak, during his travels in the East, also visited Kamrup, the modern Assam. It was there that Nur Shahi, the head of the conjurers, by her "usually alluring gestures and extraordinary display of tempting charms" tried to win him over.

1. When Guru Nanak visited the Ganges, he saw some Brahmans offering water to the sun in the belief that it would reach their ancestors. Guru Nanak also entered the River Ganges and began to throw water towards the west. The Pandits took it as an act of sacrilege and asked Nanak what he was doing. Nanak replied, "I am watering a little farm I have in my native village." The Pandits said with anger, "Fool, how can this water reach a distance of 200 miles?" Guru Nanak then retorted, "If the water cannot reach 200 miles, how can you expect that it would reach your ancestors in the next world?"
2. Nanakmata is situated about 20 miles north of Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh.



But the Guru to counteract her charms, sang a hymn to her which is called the "Kuchajji".<sup>1</sup> The effect of this hymn was that she at last grew weary of her efforts and fell at Nanak's feet and became a worshipper of the Lord's Name. After that incident the Guru resumed his journey. When he reached near Orissa, so goes the Sikh tradition, the 'Kal-Yug' or the Devil-incarnate assumed a terrible form and tried to frighten the Guru, but in vain. Then he offered Nanak the wealth of the world, the sovereignty of the East and of the West. But Guru Nanak was a perfect master. He knew that sovereignty over one's own self was much superior to the sovereignty of the whole world ; and so he successfully resisted the Devil. At last, the 'Kal-Yug' fell at the Guru's feet, took the dust of his feet and went away—of course, "not having become a convert to the holy life." It is God's Will that the devil must not become holy and come near Him.

During his first *Udasi* or travels, the Guru also visited Puri in Orissa, where there is a great temple of Jagannath, the Lord of the Earth. An idol of Vishnu—under the name of Jagannath—is worshipped there. The Guru did not go to Puri in adoration of this god, but to teach the people there that the worship of God's Name was far superior to the worship of any deity. From Puri, he returned to the Punjab and visited Ajodhan, the present-day Pakpattan in the Montgomery District of the West Punjab. There, he met Sheikh Ibrahim, popularly called Sheikh Brahm, the then incumbent of Farid's Shrine. The Guru exchanged thoughts with him and the latter got a number of doubts of his mind cleared. From Pakpattan, the Guru and Mardana proceeded to Bisiar where one Jhanda, a carpenter, became his devotee and joined him in his travels.

This first tour of Guru Nanak took about twelve years ; and Mardana, at last, grew homesick and expressed his strong desire to return home. It was while they were returning to Talwandi that Guru Nanak visited Lahore and converted a rich Khatri, named Duni Chand. On Guru Nanak's return to his home, he did not enter the village, but remained in a secluded place, a few miles away from the inhabited area. Guru Nanak's father and mother persuaded him to give up his wanderings and settle down

1. "Kuchajji" means a woman who does not know how to lead a successful household life.

to lead domestic life. But Guru Nanak's mission was not yet complete and so, in spite of their entreaties, and after a few months' stay, he undertook another arduous and extensive tour—this time he decided to visit the Deccan in southern India.

In his second tour, he was accompanied by two Jats, named Saido and Gheho, and that time he wore a garb different from what he had worn in the first travels or *Udasi*. Now, he put on wooden sandals, wrapped himself in a sheet of cloth and put a turban of twisted rope on his head. It is also said that on his forehead, he put a patch and a 'streak', the symbols of Vishnu and Shiva. During the second tour, he visited important cities of the Deccan, such as Rameshwaram, Sabur, Bhaker, and Shivkanji. He even visited Ceylon and met its Raja, Shivrabh or Shivrath, and founded a *Sangat* there. Trump

**His Second Tour  
or Uddasi—Visit  
to the South**

has discredited the authenticity of the southern tour of Guru Nanak, but recent researches have shown that there is ample evidence to prove that Guru Nanak visited the important religious centres of the South. After his return from the South, Guru Nanak again returned to Talwandi.

After a short stay, Guru Nanak set out again on his wanderings and visited northern India. In that tour, he was accompanied by Hassu, a blacksmith, and Sihan, a washerman; and his dress during his third tour was slightly different from what he had worn in his previous journeys. During it, he had the shoes of leather and a headdress of animal skin. First, he spent some time in the submontane tracts of the lower Himalayas and gave his message of love and truth to the people of those areas. Next, he visited Kashmir and humbled Pandit Brahm Dass and his followers. He established a 'Sangat' in Kashmir and then moved further north. It is said that the Guru went as far as the Kailash mountain and the Mansarovar Lake and told the *jogis* of that place that the earth was groaning under the load of sin

**His Northern  
Tour—Kashmir  
and Kailash**

and it was their duty to give up their retired life and engage themselves in the service of mankind. Then the *jogis* or *sidhas* asked him to perform a miracle. To that, Nanak replied, "I have no other miracle than *Sat Nam*—the True Name." This silenced the *jogis* and they became convinced of the sincerity and devotion of the Guru to the Lord. After staying there for some time, Guru Nanak return-







ed to Talwandi by way of Jammu and Sialkot.

**His Fourth Tour — Mecca Medina & Bagdad** during those travels wore the blue garb of a Muslim pilgrim. He also carried a staff, a pot for his ablutions and a prayer-carpet<sup>1</sup> under his arm ; and it is said that throughout his Western tour he was in trousers. In due course, Nanak and Mardana reached Mecca. The Sikh tradition says that when the Guru lay down to sleep, he stretched his feet in the direction of the *Kaaba*. The high priest Rukundin took offence at what he had done and remonstrated with him for that sacrilege. But Nanak is reported to have said to him, "Turn my feet in that direction where God is not." This pointing out of the omnipresence of God was a great lesson to all those who were there and they fell at Nanak's feet. It is said that from Mecca, he proceeded to Medina, the city of the Prophet and there, too, he told the people to lead a righteous life and worship the Name of God. Then he returned from there and, on his way back, visited Bagdad.

The site where Nanak had a talk with Shaikh Bahlol of Bagdad has been discovered and the inscription that is found on the wall in the neighbourhood of that site has proved beyond doubt that Guru Nanak visited Bagdad in 1520-21. His chief devotee, Shaikh Bahlol, raised a memorial in honour of the Guru's visit to that place. I. Banerjee seems to have made a mistake in interpreting the Bagdad inscription.<sup>2</sup> His view that a memorial was raised by Nanak in honour of the Muslim *faqir* of Bagdad whom he adopted as his guru cannot be accepted. Firstly, all his hymns make it clear that Nanak's only Guru was God or God's Word. He could not accept any mortal as his guru. Besides, to build memorials was alien to the temperament and teachings of Nanak. Moreover, it was impossible for Guru Nanak

1. Bhai Gur Dass Bhalla's '*Waran*', as given in Appendix XIX of Cunningham's *History of Sikhs*, p. 367

2. In English translation the inscription reads : "In memory of the Guru, that is the Divine Master Baba Nanak Faqir Aulia, this building has been raised anew with the help of seven saints and the chronogram reads. "The blessed disciple has produced a spring of Grace—year 927 H (A.D. 1520-21)."

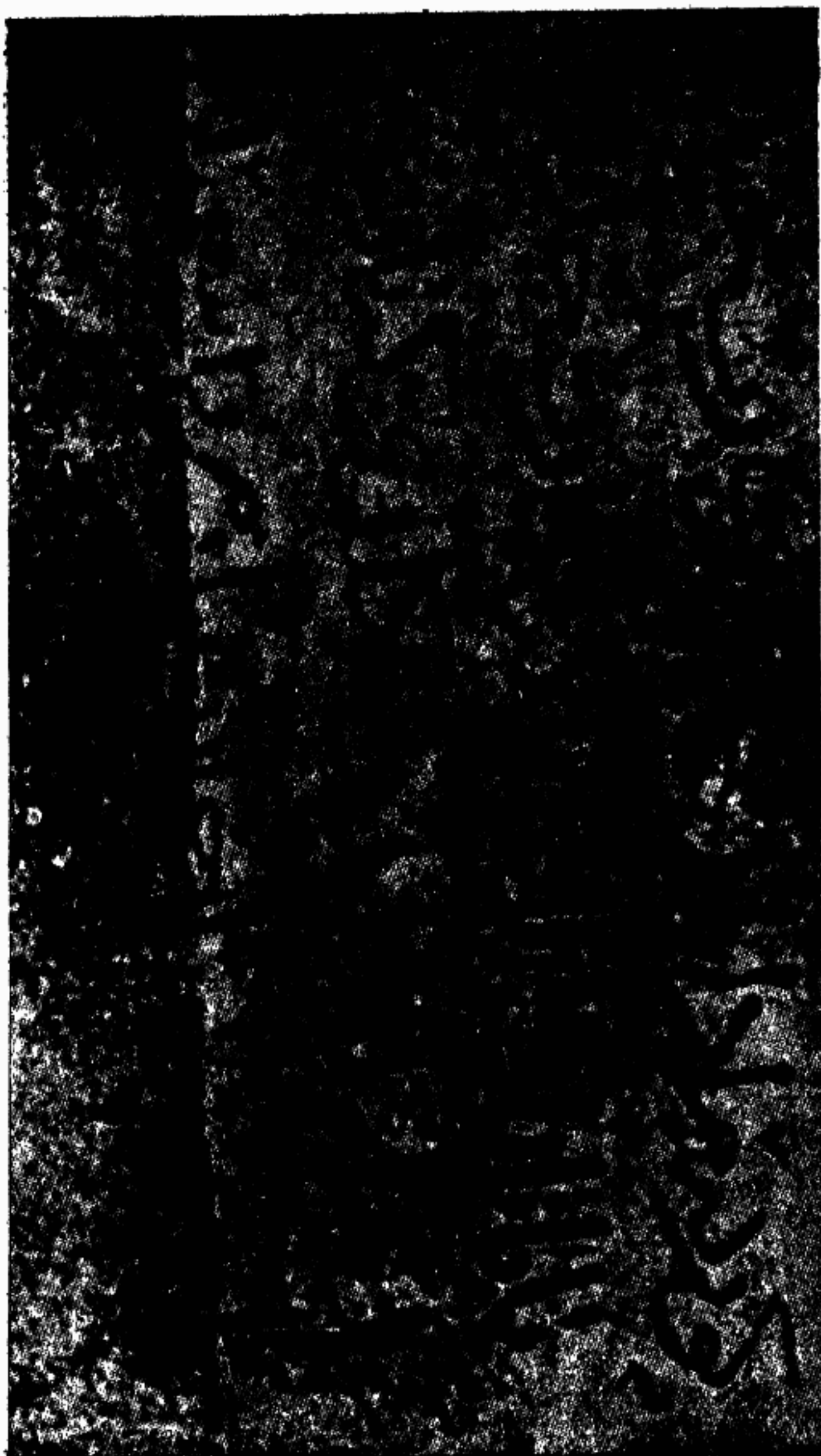
to raise a memorial in an alien country. What is probable and what becomes clear from the inscription is that Guru Nanak by his message must have won over the Shaikh and, consequently, a memorial must have been raised by the Shaikh in his honour. Recently, another inscription in Arabic has been found which reads like this: "Here spake the Hindu Guru Nanak to Fakir Bahlol, and for this sixty summers since the Guru left Iran, the soul of Bahlol has rested on the master's word like a bee poised on a dawn-lit honey rose." From Bagdad, he returned to the Punjab and, on his way, stopped at Hasan Abdal and met Vali Qandhari.

The fifth and final tour of Guru Nanak was also restricted to places in the Punjab. During the years 1523-24, Guru Nanak again visited Pakpattan and had another long conversation with Shaikh Brahm. He also visited Dipalpur, Kanganpur, Kasur, Patti, and Vairawal. It is said that during that tour, he went to Kiri Pathandi (in Amritsar) also and converted a large number of Pathans. Next, he visited Batala where he gave the message, of 'Sat Nam' or the True Name to Bhangar Nath and his followers. From Batala, he came to Sayyidpur (Eminabad) to meet his old devotees. He was just in the neighbourhood of Sayyidpur when Babar, the Mughal invader, attacked the town, captured it and put a large number of its inhabitants to the sword. Guru Nanak's heart bled to see the atrocities perpetrated by the Mughals and, therefore, composed the following hymns which find a place in the '*Adi-Granth*'.

As the Word of the Lord cometh to me  
 so I make it known, O Lalo—  
 Bringing a bridal procession of sin,  
 Babar hath hastened from Kabul and hath demanded  
 wealth as his bride, O Lalo.  
 Modesty and religion have vanished,  
 falsehood marcheth in the van, O Lalo."  
 The occupation of the Qazi and the Brahmans is gone,  
 the Devil readeth the marriage service, O Lalo."

The Sikh traditions say that even Guru Nanak, along with Mardana, was arrested and thrown into prison by Babar. The Mughal officer in charge of the prison, Mir Khan, then reported to Babar that Nanak was a great *faqir* and it was advisable to set him free. Babar himself was a man of faith. His discerning eye

**The Meeting of  
 Babar and Guru  
 Nanak**







found in Nanak a divine figure and so he issued orders for his release. But Baba Nanak refused to leave the prison till thousands of his countrymen confined in the jails were also set free. The Mughal conqueror, thereupon, set all the prisoners free and remarked: "If I had known that the city contained such holy men, I would not have destroyed it." Though the Turkish and Persian records of the time, including Babar's memoirs, do not mention this meeting of Baba Nanak and Babar, yet it is difficult to disbelieve this whole incident. All the Sikh sources mention it. The hymns of Guru Nanak which find a place even in the *Adi Granth* refer to Babar's attack on Sayyidpur and Guru Nanak's concern about it.

From Sayyidpur, Baba Nanak proceeded to Pasrur and Sialkot and organized 'Sangats' at both these places. Then, he went to Mithankot where he converted the celebrated saint, Mian Mitha. Then he came to a place near the present-day Dera Baba Nanak (Gurdaspur District) on the River Ravi, where with the assistance of his disciples, he founded a new *basti* called Kartarpur, and also established a big *Dharamsala* or temple to guide the activities of his disciples. It was at this new town that he decided to spend the rest of his days. During those last few years of his life, he laid aside the habits and the garb of a *faqir*. He put an end to his "Udasis" and sent for his wife and children to join him. The Guru then demonstrated to the world that he would live up to his ideal, "Abide pure amidst the impurities of the world." It was, thus, during this last decade of his career at Kartarpur that Guru Nanak took up the work of consolidating his mission. He, during his stay at Kartarpur, set a personal example of a pure life and urged his disciples, the Sikhs, to spend their time in the same way. They should get up early in the morning, sing devotional songs, recite the Guru's Word, read *Jupji*, containing the praises of the Lord, and after their day's work, they should read "Sodar". The Guru urged his followers to lead a life of piety. They should dine together from a common kitchen, i.e. "Langar". There was none high or low in their ranks. They were all equal in his eyes and in the eyes of the Lord and, therefore, they should love one another. Thus, in the course of a few years, Guru Nanak consolidated his work and laid the foundations of a "church-nation", i.e. a community of worshippers of the Name. ~~It is very difficult~~ to determine the

**Guru Nanak Settles Down at Kartarpur and Consolidates His Mission His Sikhs are called Bhais or Brothers**

exact number of the people who became his disciples. All sources indicate that he had a large following and it included both Hindus and Muslims. Some of his close associates were Mardana, Lalo, Bhagirath, Bhai Buddha, Sudhara, Mian Mitha, Jhanda and Lehna, and they were called "brothers" or "Bhais" by the Guru.

At last, the Guru felt that his end was drawing near. He, therefore, decided to nominate his successor. He tested the faithfulness of his sons as well as of his disciples and eventually decided to nominate Lehna as his successor. He was so pleased with him that he called him by the name of Angad "the flesh of his flesh and the bone of his bone." A simple succession ceremony was then performed. Guru Nanak put five *paisas* (pice) before Angad and then bowed to him in token of his succession to the Guruship. As soon as that was known, there arose a quarrel between his Hindu and Muslim disciples how they would dispose of their Master's body. The Hindus proposed to burn it, whereas the Muslims wanted to bury it and raise a tomb over it. At last, the Master himself suggested the solution. He told them that after his death, flowers should be strewn by the Hindus on one side of his bier and by the Muslims on the other. His body should be taken by those whose flowers remained fresh on the next day. Guru Nanak died, or, as the Sikhs would like to call it, his soul merged into the Universal Soul on the 10th day of the light-half of the month of Assuj, Sambat 1595, *i.e.* A.D. 1538. According to the instructions of the Master, flowers were placed on both the sides of his bier. But when the sheet was lifted the next day, both the Muslims and the Hindus were amazed to find that the flowers of both the parties were fresh. The body of Guru Nanak, however, was not there. So, they divided the sheet into two halves. The Hinds burnt it and then raised a shrine over it. The Musalmans buried it and raised a tomb over it. Both have been now washed away by the River Ravi and Macauliffe says, "perhaps providentially so as to avoid idolatrous worship of the Guru's last resting-place."

**Last Days of  
Guru Nanak**

### III

#### Teachings of Guru Nanak

According to Indubhushan Banerjee, three things stand out

pre-eminently in the teachings of Guru Nanak. These are :

- (a) The faith in the One True Lord ;
- (b) the worship of His Name ; and
- (c) the necessity of a guru in the worship of the Name.

In the preamble of the *Jupji* which contains the hymns of Guru Nanak, he defines God in the following words: "There is but one God whose name is true. He is the Creator, devoid of fear and enmity, immortal, unborn, and self-existent.

**Basic Doctrines  
of Nanak**

Through the favour of the Guru, repeat His Name.

The True One was in the beginning, the True One was in the primal age. The True One is, O Nanak; the True One also shall be." Guru Nanak laid great emphasis on the unity of God-head. He said that no one else could claim equality with Him. In the minds of the Musalmans, the Prophet

**His conception  
of God :**

**(i) Faith in  
One God**

has come to occupy a position almost equal to that of God and in practice even superior to His.

Similarly, among the Hindus, the worship of *avtars* and goddesses had practically destroyed all sem-

blance of the oneness of the Supreme Being. Guru Nanak's message was: "Excepting One, there is none besides. He is unrivalled." God, according to Guru Nanak, is above Vishnu, above Brahma, superior to Shiva and is the creator of Ram and Krishna.<sup>1</sup> He further emphasized the unique position of the Lord when he said, "There are hundreds of thousands of Muhammads, but only one God."<sup>2</sup> Most of the Indian saints worshipped God in the human form as Rama, Krishna, Narayan, *i.e.* their God was anthropomorphous. But Nanak's God is "both immanent and transcendent" and different from all other divinities and prophets. He is transcendent because nobody "knoweth His limits." It is

**(ii) God—Imma-  
nent and  
Transcendent**

only the True One Himself who knoweth how great He is : At the same time, He is "immanent."

Guru Nanak in one of his hymns says, "Nanak, the beloved is not far from thee. Behold Him in thy heart." In another hymn he says :

"The light which is in everything is Thine, O Lord of light,  
From its brilliancy, everything is brilliant."

1. See G. C. Narang : *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 38

2. Macauliffe : *The Sikh Religion*, Volume 1, p. 121

In 'Asa Di War', another composition of Guru Nanak, he has expressed the same thing in the following verse :<sup>1</sup>

This world is the True One's chamber ;  
The True One's dwelling is therein.  
Some by His order He absorbeth in Himself ;  
Others by His order He destroyeth."

But Guru Nanak's God is not unapproachable to his votaries. Man can have access to Him through sincere devotion and love and by leading a righteous life. According to him, God is merciful. He affords solace to his disciples in time of affliction and helps them when they are in need of His assistance. He is not far from his disciples. He lives in their hearts once they surrender themselves to His will, and then He takes charge of them. He, however, is not confined in a temple or in any idol. He is omnipresent. Thus, in Guru Nanak's doctrine, idolatry finds no place.

(iii) Belief in  
Personal and  
Merciful God

But, according to Nanak, it is not easy to obtain the mercy of the True Lord. One is required to efface one's self completely. A man must surrender himself completely to God's will. In one of his hymns he says, "Do whatever thy Bridegroom biddeth thee ; give Him thy body and soul." At another place, he says, 'Efface thyself, so shalt thou obtain Thy bridegroom.' This surrender of self to God means the complete destruction of five great enemies, which constitute the ego. Those enemies are : lust (*Kam*), anger (*Krodh*), greed or avarice (*Lobh*), attachment (*Moh*) and pride or vanity (*Ahankar*). In this way, Guru Nanak, like other *Bhakti* reformers, was emphasizing the doctrine of *Prapti*, i.e. the surrender of the human will to the Divine will."

(iv) Surrender of  
Self, the Only  
Way to Please  
God

But the destruction of ego or the surrender of self to God, according to Guru Nanak, could be obtained only through the worship of His True Name. Guru Nanak often used to say, "I have no miracle except the True Name." Unless the mind which is absorbed in the values, and the struggles of life is controlled, effective struggle against the five allies of the ego is futile. Thus, the chief duty of man is to stop the mind's wanderings and gain control over it. And the mind's wanderings can

1. See Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion* Vol, I



be stopped only through the worship of 'Sat Nam' or the True Name. Guru Nanak, therefore, said, "He who repeateth not God's Name, shall wander in birth and death." But the repetition

(b) The Miracle  
of the "True Na-  
me" (Sat Nam)

of God's Name is not merely a mechanical recitation thereof. It is not simply to be a lip-worship. The repetition of the True Name should be done with utmost devotion. The worship of the Name, according to the Guru, is the highest and purest form of worship and is the most effective method of God-realization. Nanak says, "The Name is the god of all gods. Some propitiate Durga, some Shiv, some Ganesh, and some other gods; but the Guru's Sikhs worship the True Name and, thus, remove all obstacles to salvation." The Guru in his hymns most emphatically points out to his disciples that they "who forget the Name go astray in the world" and they "who repeat not God's name shall not be saved."

But this True Name can be obtained only through the help of a true guru. The Guru says, "Without a guru no one hath obtained God, however much the matter be debated." In *Japji*, the Guru says, "Under the Guru's instruction, God's Word is heard; under the Guru's instruction its knowledge is acquired, under the Guru's instruction man learns that God is everywhere contained." Thus, the founder of the Sikh religion exhorted his devotees that the Guru is the 'raft' or 'the ladder' of the Sikhs. In *Majh Ki War*, he emphasizes the importance of the Guru's mercy in God-realization :

(c) Importance of  
Guru in God-rea-  
lization

When the True Guru is merciful, faith is protected,

When the True Guru is merciful; man shall never grieve.

When the True Guru is merciful, man shall know no sorrow.

When the True Guru is merciful, man shall enjoy divine pleasure.

Thus, like all other religious reformers of medieval India, Guru Nanak lays great stress on the adoration of the spiritual guide. "Guru Bhakti", thus, is a common feature among all the *Bhakti* schools of thought. The true Guru, however, cannot be easily found. He can be found only through God's grace. If a man once decides, and decides finally and firmly to tread the spiritual path, God sends him His grace and he finds the Guru. The

Guru is Found  
through Divine  
Grace

Word or True Name is thus revealed through His grace. Guru Nank thus urged his votaries to seek the Divine grace.

But this Divine grace is closely associated with man's own actions. The Guru says, "Without good deeds, Nanak, how shall

**Message of the  
Guru — "Abide  
Pure amid the  
Impurities of the  
World"—Live in  
the World, but  
Do Good Deeds**

you meet your spouse ?" In one of his hymns, while ridiculing the wearing of 'janeu' or the sacred thread, he says, "Make mercy thy cotton, contentment thy thread, continence its knot, truth its twist. That would make a *janeu* for the soul ; if you have it, then put it on me." Guru Nanak's conception of virtuous life was a little different

from the accepted standards of virtue of those days. He denounced all the external marks of holiness which a common man in those days considered to be the essentials of religion.

**Emphasis on  
Karma**

To burn in fire, to stay long in water, to fast, to do penance with the body upside down, to wander in the world as a pilgrim, were not acts of virtue,

but mere bodily acts and exercises. They had nothing to do with the soul. Guru Nanak's message to his votaries was, "Abide pure amidst the impurities of the world." But what is this purity ? The Guru says, "They are not to be called pure who wash their bodies and sit at leisure ; rather the pure are they, O Nanak, who enshrine the Lord in their hearts". Thus, for the Guru, virtuous was he who had a burning love for God. He wanted his followers to eschew asceticism or renunciation of the world. They were asked to lead a householder's life. They should make use of all things in the world but should not deem them their own but only God's property. Khushwant Singh says, "There are positive injunctions against austere asceticism, involving renunciation of society, celibacy and penance. All the Gurus led normal family lives and discharged secular functions as householders and acted as the spiritual mentors of the people. The concept of righteous living is meaningless, except in the context of the community. There is constant reference to living in the world but not becoming worldly. The ideal is to achieve saintliness as a member of the society, to have a spiritual existence with the necessary material requisites—"raj men jog kamayo".<sup>1</sup> According to Nanak, the heart of his followers should be fixed on meeting Him and thus only can they "abide pure amid the impurities of the world,"

1. Kushwant Singh: *Jupji*, p. 18

Nanak, in this way, enjoined upon his devotees that while living in the world, they should maintain absolute purity—the purity of thought, word and deed. “Without good deeds,” declared Nanak emphatically, “there can be no salvation.” He had, thus, a firm faith in the theory of *Karma* and in his hymns he lays great stress on it. In his *Japji*, he writes:

“Words do not a saint or a sinner make,  
Action alone is written in the book of fate,  
What we sow that alone we take ;  
O Nanak, be saved or forever transmigrate.”<sup>2</sup>

Guru Nanak even denounced the mere reading and the knowledge of religious books. He urged the people to apply the wisdom contained in the holy books in day-to-day life. Otherwise, the mere possession of these books and even their knowledge would lead them nowhere. In ‘Asa-di-War’ he says :

‘A man may load carts with books. He may load men with books to take with him.

Books may be put in boats ; pits may be filled with them.

A man may read books for months ; he may read them for years.

He may read them for life ; he may read them while he hath breath.

Nanak, only one word, only God’s Name, would be of account.

All else would be a senseless discussion of the proud.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, for Guru Nanak “Love for God, love for His Name” was the most effective form of worship.

All the Hindu religious reformers of the Middle Ages and especially the *Bhakts* had laid stress on the sentiment of love. But none of them had emphasized it so strongly and extensively as Guru Nanak did. The Guru had a firm faith that every practice or institution which was not based on the principle of ‘Divine Love’ should be attacked root and branch. The caste-system, which was the ‘steel-frame’ of the Hindu society, was not based on the principle of love. Love of God implied love of the whole mankind and, thus, indirectly implied equality. The Hindu caste-

1. Kushwant Singh : *Jupji*, p. 13

2. Macauliffe : *The Sikh Religion*, Volume I, p, 229

system, based on the principle of inequality, was, therefore, greatly denounced by the Guru who said, 'Castes are folly, names are folly. Nanak not only condemned castes, he condemned even the spirit of sectarianism because it was against his basic teachings of 'love'.

**Denounced Caste-  
System and  
Sectarianism**

'There is no Hindu and no Musalman' were the words that he uttered after self-realization. These words clearly show how boldly he attacked the great and sacred things of the time. He wanted the Hindus and the Musalmans never to forget that they are the children of one and the same God. They should love one another. If they quarrel or fight, they will deprive themselves of God's love and favour—and, thus, they will not bring credit to the sect or religion to which they belong.

"Guru Nanak, like other *Bhakti* philosophers, was more concerned with the spreading of religious tolerance than with the founding of a new community. He was content to be a teacher. He laid no claims to divinity or to kinship with God." The burden of his whole philosophy is that man should completely efface himself for the realization of God's love ; and the highest goal that he placed before his disciples was to attain the supreme bliss—a state of mind which knows neither pleasure nor pain. Guru Nanak gives the picture of that Supreme State in the following verses :

**Supreme Bliss,  
the Goal of a  
Devotee**

"The Supreme State is altogether a void, all people say.  
In the Supreme State, there is no rejoicing or mourning,  
In the Supreme State, there are felt no hopes or desires,  
In the Supreme State are seen no castes or caste marks,  
In the Supreme State are no sermons or singing of hymns,  
In the Supreme State abideth heavenly meditation,  
In the Supreme State are those who know themselves.  
Nanak, my mind is satisfied with the Supreme State."

Thus, Guru Nanak, by his teachings, tried to establish a feeling of fraternity between the Hindus and the Musalmans, and, in fact, his doctrines appealed both to the Hindus and the Musalmans.

**Guru Nanak's  
Teachings in Re-  
lation to Islam  
and Hinduism**

The latter thought that his doctrines were not contrary to the basic teachings of the Quran ; and so did the Hindus feel that Guru Nanak was a Bhagvata and his beliefs and tenets were the same as preached by Lord Krishna Himself. It was because of the



catholicity of his teachings that he was regarded as a 'Pir' by the Mohammedans and as a 'Guru' by the Hindus.

As regards the question whether Nanak was inspired by the teachings of Islam or Hinduism, some writers say that he was very much impressed by the monotheism of Islam. Therefore they attribute his doctrines to Islamic influence. But Guru Nanak denies the basic principle of Islam when he says that man can obtain God's love and grace without the Prophet. Moreover, Nanak's God is not the Semitic God—the absolute and transcendent God of Islam. Like the God of the Hindus, He resides in His transcendence and is separated from this world, of which He is the support, by His *maya*. He is also found in everything of the world. He seems to have been inspired by the philosophy of the *Gita*. His instructions to his devotees broadly resemble Lord Krishna's message to his *Bhagat* Arjan. Guru Nanak promises the help and grace of the Lord to his Sikhs with as much confidence as Lord Krishna did to his votaries.

#### IV

#### Was Guru Nanak a Reformer or a Revolutionary ?

After the study of Guru Nanak's teachings, a question naturally arises whether Guru Nanak was a reformer or a revolutionary. G.C. Narang and Payne, after a careful and analytical study of

View of I. Bannerjee and G.C. Narang—A Reformer

Guru Nanak's teachings and the teachings of other Hindu 'Bhakts' who preceded him, have come to the conclusion that Guru Nanak belonged to the great family of *Bhakti* reformers and that, in the fundamentals of his teachings, he differed very little with them. If he revolted against the caste-system, that revolting was not something very revolutionary. Already before him, Kabir had denounced it in equally strong terms. Similarly, when Nanak denounced pilgrimages, fasts, and penances, he was attacking the perversions and not the basic beliefs of the Hindu religion. While emphasizing his doctrine of love, Guru Nanak took the example of the existing institutions and practices and told his

(i)  
'Did not Attack the Fundamentals but Perversions of Hindu Religion

devotees about their limited utility. He did not enjoin upon his followers to give up fasts or pilgrimages. What he really wanted them to understand was that as compared with devotion to and love of God, these practices, rites and formalities for

mere remuneration had little value<sup>1</sup>.

(ii)  
No Disrespect  
to Hindu Avatars  
and Divinities

In the same way, when Guru Nanak challenged the sacrosanct position of the Hindu divinities and *avtars*, he did not mean any disrespect to them. He simply wanted to point out to his devotees that the Hindu *avtars* and goddesses were different from the One Supreme God. He told them their proper positions in relation to Him. The idea of the Supreme God—His immanence and transcendence, on which Guru Nanak laid great emphasis—was not new to the Hindu world of his time. We can say on the authority of Radhakrishnan that even Ramanuj held that God is both the transcendent and the immanent ground of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, if he attacked the Vedas or the Puranas, he did not question the wisdom or the philosophy contained in them. He wanted the people not to parade the knowledge contained in the scriptures, and not to become vain after reading them. What he wanted to point out to them was that they should mould their daily life according to the wisdom contained in the Vedas. Thus, as Indubhushan Banerjee says, "One must realize the difference between an attack on scripturalism and one on the Scriptures themselves"<sup>3</sup> According to him, Guru Nanak attacked scripturalism and not the Hindu Scriptures. He told all and sundry that the reading of Vedas without love for God was a 'secular occupation' and not a religious practice.

(iii)  
His Teachings,  
Identical with  
Those of Bhakti  
Reformers

Besides, these writers point out that some of the great tenets of Nanak's creed were the same as advocated by other Hindu religious reformers of the Middle Ages. The surrender of the human will to the Divine Will was simply the repetition of the old doctrine of '*Prapti*'. Emotional worship, belief in the theory of *Karma*, indifference towards rituals, flexibility in caste-system, adoration of the guru or guru *bhakti*, transmigration of the soul, service of God and of God's children, i.e. *Kain-Kirya*, had all been emphasized earlier by the Hindu *Bhakats*, though not so systematically and strongly as had been done by Nanak. The inclusion of the hymns of most of the Hindu

1. Payne : *A Short History of Sikhs*, pp. 19-20

2. Radhakrishnan : *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 686

3. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Volume I. p. 139

*Bhakats*, such as Namdev, Kabir and Ravi-Das in the *Adi Granth* of the Sikhs also points to the identity of Guru Nanak's message with the teachings of those *Bhakats*, who even up to this day, are regarded as the great teachers of Hinduism. Thus, according to Payne, whose views have been elaborated by Indubhushan Banerjee, Guru Nanak's aim, "was not to sweep away Hinduism, but to restore it to its ancient purity. Like Luther, he came to protest—to protest against the idolatry, the blind superstitions and the empty rituals, which had so long estranged religion from morality and the hearts of men from their Creator."<sup>1</sup>

But there is another group of writers—Macauliffe, Bhai Kahn Singh and Professor Teja Singh—who are of the opinion that Guru Nanak was not a reformer but a revolutionary. According to these writers, he 'aimed at upsetting the cherished institutions of the society in which he was born, bringing about a social cataclysm and building up a new order on the ruins of the old.'

Teja Singh's and  
Kahn Singh's  
Views regarding  
Nanak Being a  
Revolutionary

He condemned the caste-system, the 'steel frame' of the Hindu Society, most vehemently. Rather, he exhorted his devotees to defy the rules of caste exclusiveness. When his disciples (Sikhs) met in congregations or ate in the common kitchen or "langar", they were to sit together, eat together and worship together, irrespective of the fact whether they belonged to the higher castes or the lower castes. Earlier, some of the Hindu reformers had denounced caste but none had taken concrete steps to defy it in such a practical manner and on such a mass scale. Thus, the open defiance, rather the revolt of Guru Nanak against the most sacred institution of the Hindus, has led the above historians to style him a revolutionary.

(i)  
Guru Nanak  
Condemned  
Caste

Moreover, Guru Nanak also condemned asceticism wholesale. But renunciation, fasting and penance had been always regarded as the essentials of the Hindu religion. Guru Nanak condemned them outright and told the people that they were merely bodily exercises. He asked his disciples that they could attain salvation without even adopting the garb of a *fakir*. The message of Nanak was: 'Abide pure amid the impurities of the world.' It had a revolutionary tone and was regarded as revolutionary by all

(ii)  
Condemned  
Asceticism—  
Basic feature of  
the Hindu Reli-  
gion

1. Payne : *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 25

those *jogis* and *tapas* who came in contact with him during his long travels.

Similarly, he also questioned the utility of idol-worship, pilgrimage to the sacred rivers of the Hindus and even the sanctity of the Vedas. He did not stop there. He even expressed his doubts regarding the worship of the Hindu *avtars* and divinities. He founded a separate organization of his devotees which was known as 'Sangats' and which did not conform to the Hindu way of life. Above all, he did not base his teachings on Hindu mythology nor did he and his followers borrow their material for their religious inspiration from the Sanskrit lore. All those things were regarded as revolutionary steps and, therefore, it was but natural for some of the historians to conclude that Guru Nanak was a revolutionary.

It, however, becomes very difficult for us to accept any of these two extreme views. A detached study of Guru Nanak's life and teachings reveals that he did not consciously aim

(iii)  
Repudiated  
Hindu Mythology

at introducing a new religion different from Hinduism. The distinctive features of his message were not much different from the teachings of the medieval Hindu *Bhakats*. He, however, protested strongly against the Hindu conventionalism and the perversions which had crept into most of the Hindu religious rites and practices and which, in course of time, had come to be regarded as the essentials of the Hindu religion. Besides, none of the Hindu reformers before Nanak had condemned asceticism in such strong terms as he did. He was the first to point out in clear and emphatic words that religion is righteous living and not a bundle of rites and formulas, nor is it the renunciation of the world. But despite this novelty in his teachings, he did not try to found a new religion antagonistic to Hinduism. Sectarianism was alien to his character and beliefs, and, therefore, it is wrong to say that he founded any new faith different from, or, at least, antagonistic to, Hinduism.

But, although he did not consciously lay the foundation of a new religion, yet Guru Nanak cannot be called an ordinary religious reformer. His teachings differed in many ways from those of Ramanuj, Ramanand and other teachers, since he went beyond the narrow limits of idolatry and of regulations with regard to diet and dress. He was, thus, a radical reformer and those

His Reforms  
weres Radical. He  
Founded a New  
Brotherhood of  
Devotees but  
not a New Reli-  
gion Antagonis-  
tic to Hinduism

His Radical  
Reforms Ulti-  
mately Led to  
the Founding of  
a New Reigion



who call him a 'revolutionary', simply emphasize the radicalism of his reforms. His attempts to emancipate completely the Hindu mind from the fetters of mythology and to assign a low position to the Hindu *avtars* or divinities, like Shiva, Vishnu, Rama and Krishna as compared with the 'Supreme Lord', were very bold and serious attacks on the Hindu religious beliefs and sentiments. These attacks shook Hinduism to its very foundations. His nine successors—the later nine Gurus—however, went further and, thus, in course of time, an entirely novel structure which repudiated even some of the most sacred and cherished institutions and practices of the Hindu faith was set up.

### V. Guru Nanak's Place in History

Guru Nanak occupies a very high position in the history of the world and perhaps the highest in the history of the Punjab.

**Guru Nanak's Place in History** He is a great saviour of the suffering humanity, and he told the people that they should not live in constant fear and pain and be led away by the transitory pleasures of the body. Rather, they should strive to attain the supreme bliss. In that way, Guru Nanak ranks with the great prophets of the world—Christ, Buddha, Krishna, Confucius and Zoroaster. Like them, he brought his message direct from the True Lord—the message of the "True Name"—and told the people of his times that in the Kal-yug, *i.e.* the Dark Age, only the worship of 'The Name' could save them. His message is as effective and true today as it was in those days.

But the people of the Punjab are specially proud of him because this great teacher was not only a native of the Punjab, but after his long and arduous tours he settled down in the Punjab and tried to uplift the Punjabis. G.C. Narang writes about him, "Nanak left the Hindus of the Punjab immensely better than he had found them. Their beliefs had been ennobled, their worship purified, the rigidity of caste considerably relaxed, their minds greatly emancipated, and they had now become more fit to enter on the career of natural progress to which Nanak's successors were destined to lead them."<sup>1</sup> The whole atmosphere of the

1. G. C. Narang : *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 43

Punjab was thus permeated with the message of Nanak and the same writer says : "It leavened the whole Hindu thought in the Punjab and improved the moral and spiritual tone of the whole people."<sup>1</sup> Thus, no one before him and no one after him in the Punjab had commanded such a profound respect and deep love of the people, as was enjoyed by this 'great beloved of God' and the 'hero of humanity'. Millions of people—Hindus, Sikhs and even some Muslims—daily recite his hymns (*Japji* and *Asa-di-War*) in the morning before even starting their day's work. To the tens of thousands of the Punjabi people, Guru Nanak is a divine figure, an object of worship and adoration.

Some writers compare Guru Nanak with Martin Luther of Germany. Of course, there is much common between the two. Both lodged bold protests against the conventionalism, emptiness of rituals, ceremonies and externals of the religions of their birth and the teachings of both, in course of time, resulted in the foundations of separate sects of their own. Guru Nanak's sect was known as Sikhism and Luther's as Protestantism. Both Guru Nanak and Luther insisted that the worship of God should be conducted in a language understood by the people and the people should not bother themselves with those ideas and actions which obscured the Truth. But, despite these common points, their comparison is not a happy one. The teachings of Luther affected a much larger area and a greater number of people than the area and the people who fell under the spell of Nanak's message. Guru Nanak, however, was spiritually much more advanced than Luther. He had attained the state of Supreme Bliss. He had often been in communion with the Lord, and so his place is much higher than that of Luther, and equal to, if not higher than, that which is occupied by Christ, Buddha, Muhammad and Krishna. Nanak is often regarded as an incarnation of God by his followers, but Luther does not occupy any such position, nor even in the imagination of the Protestants themselves. Moreover, Luther had but little trust in the 'common man' as the maker of his own destiny in this world and in the next. Guru Nanak's message was for the 'common man.' Nanak, in fact, lived and worked for the salvation of the 'common man'. In this particular sphere, Zwingli and

1. G. C. Narang : *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 41.

**John Knox, not Martin Luther, can claim comparison with Guru Nanak.**

### **Books For Further Study**

1. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Volume I
2. Macauliffe : *The Sikh Religion*, Volume I
3. *Trumpp's Translation of Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, as edited by Harnam Singh Ballabh
4. Khushwant Singh : *Jupji*
5. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : *A Short History of Sikhs*
6. Cunningham : *History of the Punjab*
7. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
8. G. C. Narang : *Transformation of Sikhism*
9. Gyan Singh : *Panth Parkash*
10. Ratan Singh Bhangu : *Panth Parkash*
11. Payne : *A Short History of the Sikhs*
12. Archer : *The Sikhs*
13. Khazan Singh : *History and Philosophy of Sikhism*, Volume I
14. Ibbetson ; *Glossary of Tribes of the Punjab and N.W.F.P.*
15. *Janam Sakhis*
16. Puran Singh : *Ten Masters*

### **APPENDIX—I**

#### **Date of Guru Nanak's Birth**

Guru Nanak's Birthday is celebrated these days on the full-moon day, *i. e.* the Purnima of Kartik. But most of the modern historians dispute it. They say that Guru Nanak was born in the month of Baisakh and not in Kartik; and in support of this they give the following arguments :

(a) All the old *Janam-Sakhis*, and particularly the most authentic *Janam Sakhi* of Sewa Dass (written in 1588), give Baisakh as the natal month of Guru Nanak.

(b) Bhai Mani Singh in his *Gyan Ratnavli* also mentions Baisakh as the natal month of the Guru.

(c) Bhai Gurdas, too, in his *Waran* refers to Baisakh as the day of jubilation for the Sikhs on account of the birth of the Guru.

(d) As late as 1815, it was in Baisakh that the anniversary fair of the Guru's birth was celebrated at Nankana Sahib, the birth-place of Guru Nanak.

(e) The *Nanak Parkash* (written in 1823) of Bhai Santokh Singh which, for the first time, stated that Guru Nanak was born in Kartik 1526 Vikrami and died in Assu 1596 suffers from "strong inconsistency" when he says that the Guru lived for 70 years, 5 months and seven days. This period, however, is reconcilable only if we take Baisakh as the natal month of the Guru.

Macauliffe gives the following reason for Guru Nanak's birthday celebrations in the month of Kartik :

In the time of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, there lived at Amritsar one Bhai Sant Singh who was held in high esteem by the Maharajah and the Sikhs. And a few miles from Amritsar is Ram Tirath—a place of pilgrimage of the Hindus—where, on the Purnima day of Kartik a big fair is held. Bhai Sant Singh, says Macauliffe, desired "to establish an opposition fair in Amritsar on the same date and thus prevent the Sikhs from making the Hindu pilgrimage to Ram Tirath" and on account of that reason he adopted the Kartika date of Guru Nanak's birth, as given in some spurious *Janam Sakhis*.

Macauliffe also says that there may be other reasons for this change. In Baisakh, a number of Hindu fairs are held and the Sikh Bhai thought that in that month they could not attract large numbers of visitors and so they might have thought it better to adopt the month given in some *Janam Sakhi*, i.e. October, when even the weather is also suitable for celebrating a day.



## CHAPTER V

### CONSOLIDATION OF GURU NANAK'S WORK

**Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Dass**

#### I

**Guru Angad**

**1538—1552**

Guru Angad, the Second Guru, assumed charge as a spiritual leader of the Sikhs in 1538 and continued to guide them for about thirteen years. The original name of  
**Guru Angad—  
His Early Career** Guru Angad was Lehna. He was born at Mattede-Serai, in the present District of Ferozepore on March 31, 1504, and was the son of Pheru who was a petty trader. His caste was Khatri and sub-caste Trehun. His father, some time after his birth, shifted to Harike and then to Khadur. At the age of fifteen, Lehna was married to Khivi, a girl of the same village (Khadur) and, in course of time, she bore him two sons and two daughters.

Bhai Lehna was, by temperament, a religious man. Before his conversion to Sikhism, he was a devoted worshipper of the goddess Durga and used to make a yearly  
**Guru Angad's  
Conversion** pilgrimage to Jawalamukhi, a place sacred to the votaries of Durga. But one of the turning-points in his career occurred when he came into contact with Bhai Jodha, a Sikh of Guru Nanak. When Jodha's recitation of the Guru's hymns fell into the ears of Lehna, they stirred "the innermost depths of his being" and he decided to see Guru Nanak at Kartarpur at the earliest opportunity. Next year when he went on pilgrimage to Jawalamukhi, he broke his journey at Kartarpur and saw the Guru. He was so much impressed by the discourses of Guru Nanak that he decided to worship the True Name. In a very short time, he became one of the most devoted of the Guru's disciples. None of the Sikhs had such faith and confidence in Guru Nanak as Lehna had, and it was, why in preference to his own sons and other old Sikhs, Guru Nanak appointed him 'Guru' and named him 'Angad', the flesh of his flesh and the bone of his bones. After a very short time, Guru Angad left Kartarpur and made Khadur his headquarters.

The nomination of 'Angad to Guruship', says Indubhushan Banerjee, 'is a fact of profoundest significance in Sikh History.'

**Nomination of Guru Angad was a Step to Save Sikhism from Being Absorbed into Hinduism**

It placed the movement under the guidance and control of a definite and indisputable leadership and gave it a distinctive turn at the very outset of its career.<sup>1</sup> Guru Nanak during his lifetime had not organized his followers into a definite sect and if he had not appointed someone to look after them, they "would, no doubt, have soon dispersed and gradually disappeared." In other words, they would have been completely re-absorbed into Hinduism. Hinduism has no 'cut and dried' religion and it does not enjoin upon its followers to follow any fixed or uniform mode of worship. It had been tolerating and could tolerate any variety of religious opinions and practices, provided they conformed to certain fundamental beliefs—transmigration of the soul, the law of *karma*, *guru-bhakti*, etc. And thus, if Guru Nanak had not nominated his successor to continue his mission, and his successor had not taken steps to organize his disciples into a separate sect, there would have been every possibility of the Sikhs' being completely swallowed up by the great Hindu religion in course of time.

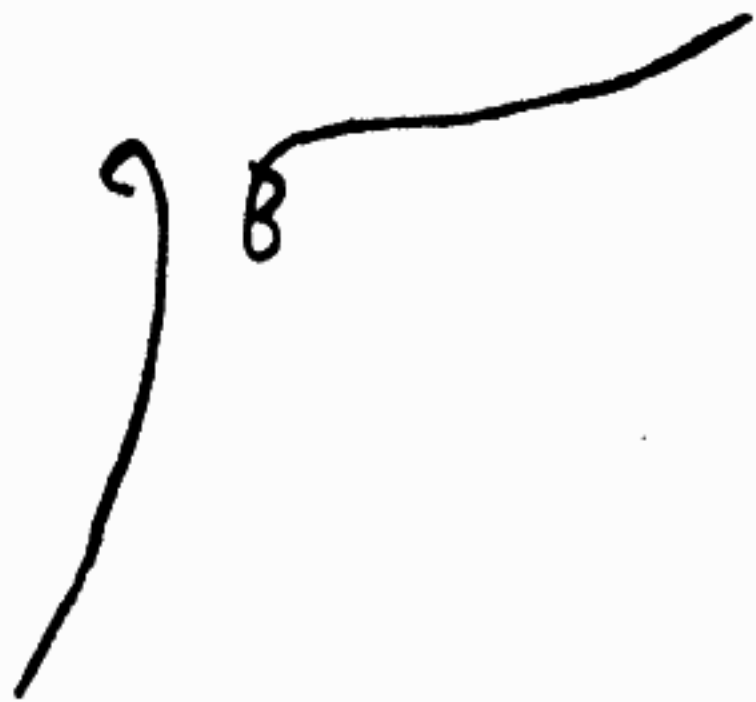
It is during the pontificate of Guru Angad that a number of developments took place 'that marked the Sikhs out as a distinctive community by themselves'. Of these, the most important is the popularization of the new script "the Gurmukhi." Till very recently, the general belief was that Guru Angad invented a new

**Popularisation of Gurmukhi Alphabet and Its Significance in the Development of Sikhism**

script called Gurmukhi. But now it has been established<sup>2</sup> that this new script was known even in the time of Guru Nanak, as his 'Patti' in the *Adi Granth* contains all the alphabets of the new script. Though Angad did not invent the new script, yet it was during his pontificate that the new script was popularized and in a short time it replaced the Landa or the 'Clipped' alphabet, hitherto commonly used by the people of the Punjab. The very fact that this script began to be called "Gurmukhi", i. e. having proceeded from the Guru's mouth 'reminded those who employed it of their duty towards their Guru

1. Grierson : *Linguistic Survey of India*, Volume IX, Part I, page 624, as quoted in Banerjee's : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Volume I, p. 156

2. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Volume I, page 157



ਸਤਿਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖ  
ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰ ਅਕਾਲ  
ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ  
ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ॥





and constantly kept alive in their minds the consciousness that they were something distinct from the common man of Hinduism."

The popularization of Punjabi and "that too through a script which was peculiarly their own could not but deal a blow to the domination of the priestly class whose influence mainly rested on their knowledge of Sanskrit which had hitherto generally been the language of religion. The appeal of the hymns was certainly more direct because it was in a language which all could understand and the new script made it doubly so because it served as a constant memento to the followers of the Guru of their distinctiveness and solidarity."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the popularization of the Gurmukhi alphabet was a great step towards the development of the Sikh religion, forming a separate sect, quite distinct from Hinduism.

Another great achievement of Guru Angad was the collection of the sayings and hymns of Guru Nanak. The tradition has it

(1) **Compilation of Guru Nanak's Biography and the Collection of the Hymns of Guru Nanak also Took the Sikhs away from Hinduism** that he called Bala who had been a life-long companion of the late Guru and had accompanied him in nearly all his travels. He asked him to tell everything that he knew about the Master. Thus, with the help of Bala, a standard biography of Guru Nanak was compiled. It was also enjoined upon the Sikhs that, in addition to the recitation of the hymns of the Master, they should also narrate

and recollect the important events in his career and, thus, derive inspiration from them. This step created a gulf between the Hindus and the Nanakpanthis or Sikhs. 'The latter gradually gave up the study of the Vedic *mantras* and hymns and instead of narrating the life of Hindu *avtars* and developing faith in them, they began to worship the Name and started the adoration of Guru Nanak. They lost all respect for the Sanskrit language, which according to orthodox Hindus, is the language of the gods.

Guru Angad, by enlarging and expanding the institution of *Langar* or the free kitchen which was started by Guru Nanak, took another important step in the formation of Sikhism as a distinctive community. This common kitchen was placed under the charge of the Guru's wife Khivi and its expenses were met out of the offerings of the disciples. However, it is said that Guru

1. See G. B. Singh : *Gurmukhi Lipi Da Janam te Vlkash*. It is, however, said that Guru Angad wrote a Punjabi primer (*Bal-Bodh*) for children.

Angad himself would not take his food from it, because Nanak had said, "Those who eat the fruit of their own labour and bestow something on others will recognize the right way."

(ii)  
The Institution of Langar (the Common Kitchen) Was also a Step in the Same Direction

He earned his living by twisting 'munj'. The kitchen was meant to feed those who were unable to work and also those who came to the Guru from distant places in connection with the worship of the Name. "This institution of the 'Langar', says Indubhushan Banerjee, "proved a powerful aid in propaganda work. Besides, serving as an asylum for the poor, it also became a great instrument for advertisement and popularity ; and it gave a definite direction to the charities of the Guru's followers."<sup>1</sup> The 'Langar' was looked upon by the devotees of the Guru as the result of their joint efforts and sacrifices and, in this way, it created consciousness of solidarity among them.

(iii)  
Guru Angad Turned Udasis out of the Sikh Fold.

Guru Angad also served the cause of Sikhism in another way. After the death of Guru Nanak, a large number of his disciples felt that without renunciation it was difficult to develop love for God and particularly to surrender the human will to the Divine Will. Siri Chand, the elder son of Nanak, who had also a grudge against his father for setting aside his claims of being his successor, headed this group of devotees who were inclined towards asceticism. Thus, Guru Angad, on his assumption of the leadership of the Sikhs, found a division in the ranks of his followers ; and if he had shown indifference or indulgence towards it at that time, the conflict would have assumed large proportions and, in course of time, this infant faith might have disappeared 'as one of the many sects that have arisen and vanished within the fold of Hinduism'. But Guru Angad, in most unequivocal terms, made it clear to his disciples that Sikhism was essentially a religion of householders. It was also declared that the Udasis, the followers of Siri Chand, although they held faith in most of the tenets of Guru Nanak, were not his true Sikhs. Thus, by emphasizing that Sikhism was a religion of householders, Guru Angad took another important step by which Sikhism drifted away from Hinduism.

The Guru also maintained a very strict discipline among his

1. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Volume I, p. 159

followers in his Court or Durbar. According to Macauliffe<sup>1</sup>, two minstrels of Guru Angad, Balwand and Satta, seeing the popularity of their master, grew proud. They began to boast that it was on account of their skill in music that the Guru had become so famous. They gradually began to disobey the Guru and even began to absent themselves from reciting the hymns at regular hours. They were even often heard saying, "Even Guru Nanak's Court would not have been known without the music of Mardana." As Guru Angad could not hear these words of disrespect directed against his Master, he dismissed them from service. It is said that he even cursed them that "their children shall wander forlorn and none shall cherish them". And the position of these 'Rababis' or followers of Mardana, Satta and Balwand, is not good. After being dismissed, they began to sing hymns at another place in order to attract the Sikhs, but nobody would come to them. Thus, they realized their mistake and then represented to the Guru to forgive them. But the Guru would not pardon those who had shown disrespect to his Master. Several times, the Sikh represented to him to forgive them, but each time the Guru refused to reverse his decision. At last, one Bhai Ladha, of Lahore, who had great influence with Guru Angad, came to Khadur, interceded<sup>2</sup> on behalf of the minstrels and, consequently, they were restored to their old positions. But this incident of Satta and Balwand makes it clear that Guru Angad maintained a strict discipline at the headquarters and that he would not mind taking a stern action against even those who were dear to him, but who created hurdles in the advancement of the general interests of the Sikhs.

According to the Sikh tradition, Emperor Humayun, after his final defeat at Kanauj, came to the Punjab and visited Khadur.

He went to Guru Angad to seek his blessings. But when the Emperor reached there, the Guru was in a trance and Humayun had to keep standing for some time. The haughty Emperor took that incident as an insult, saying that the Guru had not shown proper respect to him. Consequently, he put his hand on the hilt of his sword. When the

Meeting of  
Humayun and  
Angad

1. Macauliffe (*in The Sikh Religion*, Vol. II, pp. 22-24) says that the 'Satta and Balwand incident' occurred in the period of Guru Angad. But the general Sikh belief is that it occurred in the time of Guru Arjan.

2. Macauliffe : *The Sikh Religion*, Volume II, p. 20

Guru opened his eyes, he saw the Emperor trying to draw his sword. Thereupon, the Guru said, "When thou oughtest to have used thy sword against Sher Shah, thou didst not do so. Now, when thou comest among priests, instead of saluting them respectfully, thou desirest to draw thy sword to kill them." Humayun expressed his regrets and then sought his blessings. The Guru replied that he had made a mistake by attempting to attack him; for that, he must suffer for some time, but he prophesied that he would recover his kingdom. It is difficult to determine whether that meeting between Humayun and Guru Angad actually took place or not. But the *Suraj Prakash*, on the basis of the Sikh tradition, gives the details of this meeting. And, in the absence of any evidence contrary to these details, we have no reason to disbelieve the Sikh tradition.

There is another important incident during the period of Guru Angad about the authenticity of which some doubts are expressed;

**Rivalry of the Tapa of Khadur** and that is the rivalry of a 'Tapa' of Khadur. There was a penitent or *tapa* who lived near Khadur and who grew jealous of the growing popularity of Guru Angad. He conspired with the people of Khadur and instigated them to turn the Guru out of the village. That was done. When Guru Angad's most devoted disciple, Amar Das, learnt of that incident, he remonstrated with the people of Khadur for their folly. Consequently, the *tapa* was punished and the people brought Guru Angad back.

**Guru Angad starts the construction of Goindwal.** Guru Angad is also said to have taken steps to start building a new town near Khadur. It was Goindwal and his most devoted Sikh, Amar Das, was appointed to see to its construction which probably started in A.D. 1546<sup>1</sup>.

**Guru Angad-Confers the Guru-ship on Amar Das** When Guru Angad realized that his end was drawing near he decided to nominate his successor. He had two sons, Dasu and Dattu. But they were not as much devoted to him as Amar Das. He was all service and sacrifice to him,<sup>2</sup> and, consequently, Guru Angad decided to confer the Guruship on Amar Das. He was,

1. G. G. Narang : *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 55

2. It is said that once Guru Angad's sore foot was giving him trouble. Some dirty matter was issuing from the sore and was giving him acute pain. Amar Das at once, with his mouth, sucked the sore and, thus, comforted his master.



therefore, installed in the Guru's seat and the five copper coins and a cocoanut were placed before him. Bhai Buddha was then asked to affix to his forehead the 'Tilak' of Guruship. The Guru then asked Amar Das that he should shift to the new town of Goindwal and from there guide the activities of the Sikhs. Guru Angad died a few days later on March 29, 1552.

The Guruship of Angad is very significant in the history of the Sikhs. He followed unswervingly the path chalked out by his master and consolidated the work started by him.

**Estimate of  
Guru Angad's  
Work**

"In his own quiet way, he filled in the brickwork of the edifice whose scaffolding had been erected by Nanak."<sup>1</sup> During the thirteen years of his pontificate, he took a number of important steps, such as the popularization of the Gurmukhi alphabet and the turning out of the Udasis from the fold of Sikhism, by which he saved it from being merged into Hinduism. However, it is still doubtful whether Sikhism during the pontificate of Angad had become a separate sect. It had certainly drifted away from Hinduism, but it had not yet adopted an entirely new social or religious code. A new distinctive brotherhood was created, and it was feared that the brotherhood might not shortly break away from the parent religion. He also started collecting the hymns of Guru Nanak and, thus, made it easy for the fifth guru, Guru Arjan, to compile the *Adi Granth*, the sacred book of the Sikhs.

### **Guru Amar Dass (1552-1574)**

Guru Amar Das was born in 1479 and, thus, he was only ten years younger than Guru Nanak. He died in 1574 at the age of 95 years. No other Guru had enjoyed such a long life. He was quite over seventy when he assumed the charge of being the spiritual guide of the Sikhs. But, despite his advanced age, he worked with great zeal and devotion and won a large number of converts to the new faith.

**Guru Amar  
Das :  
1552-1575**

Guru Amar Das was the son of Tej Bhan, a petty trader of Basarke, in the present District of Amritsar. Before his conversion to Sikhism, Amar Das was a devout Vaishnava and used to go on pilgrimage to the Ganges almost every year. Though he led a righteous life, yet

**Early Career  
and Conversion**

1. Khushwant Sing : *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, p. 50

he had no peace of mind. He was always tormented by a thought that he had not yet found a good guru or teacher. But his anxiety in that connection became intolerable when one monk, after taking food from him, told him that he had made a great mistake by having taken his food from a person who had no guru. Thereafter, Amar Das prayed to God that He should show His favour and help him in finding a true guru. A short time after that, so goes the Sikh tradition, Amar Das heard Bibi Amro (daughter of Guru Angad, who was married to Amar Das's nephew) singing the hymns of Guru Nanak. He was so much captivated by those enchanting hymns that he decided to meet the successor of Nanak. Immediately after that, he went to Khadur and became one of the most devoted followers of Guru Angad. Even though he was over sixty, every day he would cover a distance of three miles in order to bring water from the River Beas for the bath of the Guru. He was an embodiment of obedience and devotion to his master. Some ignorant people even called him a servant or a water-carrier of the Guru. Some even went still further and used to call him by the nick-name of 'Amru' who had lost his reason because of old age. But Amar Das was, in fact, serving the period of apprenticeship for assuming that huge responsibility of guiding the whole church-nation after the death of his master. In 1552, when Guru Angad felt that his end was drawing near, he conferred the Guruship on him, in preference to his son Datu. But the Guru knew that his son would create trouble for him and, consequently, he advised Amar Das that after his (Guru Angad's) death, he should shift to the new town of Goindwal.

Thus in 1552, after the death of Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das left Khadur and shifted to Goindwal. But Datu would not accept the claims of Amar Das. Rather, he sat on the *Gaddi* or seat of his father at Khadur and told the Sikhs, "Amru (Guru Amar Das) is old. He is my servant. I am a prince of the Guru's line. His throne is mine." But, to his surprise, he found that, in spite of this proclamation, the Sikhs flocked around Guru Amar Das at Goindwal. Datu, however, would not take the defeat lying down. After a few days, he left Khadur for Goindwal; and when he reached there, he found Guru Amar Das enthroned in splendour. Datu could not bear that sight, and going near him, said, "Only yesterday thou wert a water-carrier in our house and today thou sittest on the *gaddi* as a guru." It is said that Datu was so

**Rivalry of Datu,  
Son of Guru  
Angad**

at that time that he even kicked Amar Das off his *Gaddi*. The Guru, however, bore all that treatment patiently ; and instead of rebuking or retaliating, he secretly retired to his native village of Basarke. Datu then tried to play the role of a guru. But the Sikhs would not listen to him. At last, he took all the wealth and movable property of Amar Das and returned to Khadur. Meanwhile, the Sikhs made a great search for the Guru, found him at Basarke and brought him to Goindwal again to guide their destinies.

But Guru Amar Das had not merely to face the opposition of Datu. Guru Nanak's elder son Baba Siri Chand who was the head of the Udasi sect revived his claim to the *Gaddi* of his father. So long as Guru Angad held the pontificate, he kept quiet, as he felt that he had been nominated by his own father. But after the death of Guru Angad, he thought that it was then his right to occupy the seat of his father. Most of the pious Hindus who were greatly impressed by the asceticism and piety of Baba Siri Chand supported him in his bid to recover the *Gaddi* of his father. Amar Das at that time rose to the occasion. He told his disciples that Guru Nanak was strongly opposed to asceticism and the greatest proof for that was that after his travels he had settled down at Kartarpur and had led the life of an ordinary householder. He had also chosen a householder as his successor. Thus, he made it clear to the Sikhs that asceticism was opposed to the teachings and precedents of the House of Nanak. Partly because of the firm stand of the Guru and partly because of Baba Siri Chand's desire to avoid a serious conflict with the Sikhs who were more organized and numerous, Amar Das eventually came out victorious in the conflict.

However, Guru Amar Das still had to face many troubles at the hands of his enemies who were feeling jealous of his growing popularity. First, the Mohammedans of Goindwal began to trouble the Guru and his Sikhs. They would break or snatch away the vessels which the Sikhs took to fetch water from the Beas for the Guru. But Amar Das did not permit his disciples to resort to violence and asked them to go on bearing all those troubles patiently. Fortunately, after a short time, a group of armed

Opposition of  
the Muslims  
and the Hindus  
of Goindwal

*Sannyasis* came to Goindwal and they fell out with the Mohammedans. The *Sannyasis* succeeded in killing most of the Mohammedans and then the Sikhs felt that the True Lord had given the Mohammedans enough punishment.

Secondly, the Khatri and the Brahmans of Goindwal and its neighbouring areas also did not look with favour the growing popularity of a sect which was drifting away from Hinduism. They also resented the construction of a "Baoli" in Goindwal which had become a place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs and to some extent had reduced the importance of the old Hindu places of worship and pilgrimage. They first teased the Sikhs and then sent a petition to the Mughal Emperor Akbar, requesting him to redress their grievance which they had against the Guru and his disciples. The Emperor then called Guru Amar Das to defend his case. But the Guru replied that he was too old to undertake a journey to Lahore, and that he would be sending his son-in-law Jetha to defend the case on his behalf.

Representation  
to Akbar

Emperor Akbar was already familiar with the piety of Guru Amar Das and so he did not insist that the Guru should come personally. Bhai Jetha who represented the Guru defended the case admirably and Akbar, therefore, gave his decision in favour of the Sikhs. But he told Jetha that he would not like that his Hindu subjects should have the impression that the Guru, by the construction of the *Baoli*, had tried to injure their feelings. He would, therefore, request him to convey to the Guru the desirability of going on a pilgrimage to one or two Hindu places of worship also, and he, on his part, would not charge any pilgrim tax from the Guru and his Sikhs. The Guru did not bear any ill-will towards the Hindus and so visited Kurukshetra and Hardwar. This gave him an opportunity to spread his faith to those far-off places. Besides, the remission of pilgrim tax by the Emperor made the Guru conspicuous and everyone began to feel that there must be something in the life and teachings of the Guru that the Emperor had made such an important exception in his case. It brought the Sikh religion into lime-light. Thus, the Emperor's patronage of the Guru and the remission of the tax threw cold water on the intrigues of the Hindus of Goindwal, who, in course of time, grew reconciled to the Guru and his Sikhs.

As mentioned above, the Guru had constructed a '*baali*' at



Goindwal. A *baoli* is a large oblong well of water. The '*baoli*' constructed by the Guru had 84 steps with landing places. The

**Construction of a Baoli at Goindwal** Guru had decreed that "whoever should attentively and reverently repeat the *Jupji* on every step, should escape from the wandering in the wombs of the eighty-four lakhs of living creatures"<sup>1</sup>. In course of time, this *Baoli*<sup>2</sup> became an important place of pilgrimage and the Sikhs in large number began to visit Goindwal in order to get salvation. The hold of the Guru on the Sikhs was, thus, greatly strengthened. Indubhushan Banerjee, therefore, says that the foundation of that *baoli* "marked a very important step in the history of Sikhism."

**Elaboration of the Institution of Langar** Guru Amar Das took further steps in the elaboration of the Sikh institution of *langar*. Macauliffe says that the choicest dishes were served to all those who came to see the Guru. The travellers, the beggars, the strangers, as well as the followers were served with good and dainty dishes. The Guru's *langar* remained open till three hours after nightfall. Whatever remained after the guests were fed, was thrown to the beasts and birds. Nothing was wasted. The Guru had issued a standing instruction that whoever wanted to see him he must first take his food in the common kitchen. It is said that when Emperor Akbar and the Raja of Harepore came, they were allowed to see the Guru only after they had taken their meals from the Guru's kitchen. He had issued a standing order that persons taking food from the *langar* were to sit in rows and were to be served in turn.

The pontificate of Guru Amar Das is also significant because he took the first step towards the organization of the Sikhs. He

1. Macauliffe : *The Sikh Religion*, Volume 2, pp. 96-97

2. It is said that before Guru Amar Das started the construction of the *Baoli*, he fell into a trance and Guru Nank appeared before him. He told him to make a place of pilgrimage where God alone should be worshipped. Consequently, Guru Amar Das purchased a piece of land and with the help of his Sikhs, started the digging work. But after some progress in that direction was made, the Guru found that large stones were hindering their further progress. He then called his Sikhs that he wanted one of them to drive a peg into its base ; but that involved a great danger to life. One Manak Chand offered himself ; but when he had driven the peg, the *Baoli* overflowed with water and Manak Chand was drowned. Later on, says the Sikh tradition, Manak Chand was restored to life through the miraculous powers of the Guru.

introduced the famous 'Manji' system. At the time when Guru Amar Das took the charge, the number of Sikhs had greatly increased. It was felt by the Guru that it was difficult to offer instruction to all his disciples in person. He, therefore, divided the Sikh spiritual Empire into twenty-two provinces or bishoprics which were called 'Manjis'. A pious and devoted Sikh was given the charge of each province or *Manji* to act as a bishop and vice-regent of the Guru in that locality. He was to carry on the pastoral work in his area. The word *Manji* means a charpoy or couch. The Guru used to sit on a '*Manja*' or cot while offering instructions to his devotees. As the Guru now established 'branch-gaddis' in different localities, it was naturally understood that a 'Manji' was instituted. It is, why the system of establishing branches of the Sikh congregation, is known as the 'Manji system'. The list of those 22 Sikhs who held the charge of those *Manjis* is not available. But this *Manji* system went a long way in strengthening the foundations of the Sikh Church.

#### The Manji System

#### Other Reforms of Guru Amar Das

##### (i) New Place of Pilgrimage

of social reforms also. Firstly, by the construction of a *baoli* at Goindwal, he provided a new place of pilgrimage for his Sikhs. The disciples of the Guru were told that they could wash away all their sins by a dip in the Goindwal *Baoli*, provided they recited the whole *Jupji* at each step. Thus, Guru Amar Das took a practical step by which he discouraged the Sikhs from going to Hindu places of pilgrimage.

##### (ii) New Way of Celebrating Hindu Festivals

The Guru told the Sikhs that big gatherings of the Sikhs from all places would be held on the first day of both the months of Baisakh and Magh and on the occasion of Diwali. Thus, the Sikhs were not to celebrate the old Hindu festivals in the ordinary Hindu fashion, but were to go to the Guru and there celebrate those festivals in the new manner, as the Guru had told them.

##### (iii) New Death & Marriage Ceremonies

The Guru also told his disciples that their birth ceremonies and death ceremonies were to be performed differently from those of the Hindus. In the 'Sadd' hymns, the Guru asks his Sikhs neither to call the Pandit nor read *Garar Puran* when performing the death ceremonies of their relatives. Similarly, when the Guru's grand-

son Sidhjogi was born, he composed 'The Anand' or song of joy which since then is repeated on occasions of rejoicings by the Sikhs. It was enjoined upon the Sikhs that the Guru's words be recited while celebrating the marriages of their relatives.

**(iv) Prohibition of 'Sati' and 'Pardah'** Guru Amar Das is also said to have prohibited the practice of 'Sati' or the burning of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands. It is difficult to imagine whether the Guru was able to enforce that prohibition strictly on his Sikhs, but still by persuasion he must have achieved a good amount of success in that direction. He is also said to have denounced 'Pardah'—covering of the face by women—and also drinking. It is said that he even introduced a new mode of salutation when the Sikhs were to meet one another.

**Composed 'Anand' or the Song of Joy** Guru Amar Das's term of office is also significant in another way. As described above, he composed the hymns which are known as 'Anand' or 'Song of Joy'. This composition consists of 38 *Pauris* or stanzas and is repeated by the Sikhs on occasions of marriages and rejoicings, and also at large feasts and before large Sikh gatherings, particularly when they meet to hold the non-stop recitation of the *Adi Granth*, their Holy Book. Amar Das's grandson, Sahansar Ram (son of Mohan), collected most of the sayings and hymns of his grandfather together with the compositions of Guru Angad and *Bhagats*, and, compiled a number of volumes, which later on were used by Guru Arjan in the compilations of the *Adi Granth*.

**Akbar's Visit to Goindwal—Grant of Land** Another significant event of the pontificate of Guru Amar Das is that Emperor Akbar developed a special liking for the religion of Nanak which preached universal love and tried to bridge the gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims. It is said that after the great victory of Chitor, Akbar came to Goindwal and was greatly impressed to see the working of the Guru's institution of the *langar*. He even took his meals in the Guru's *langar*. After that, he requested the Guru to accept a grant of land for the maintenance of the *langar*, but the Guru declined the offer<sup>1</sup>. But that visit of the Emperor,

1. It is said that the Emperor, in spite of the refusal of the Guru, made a grant, in the name of the Guru's daughter, Bibi Bhani, of several villages in and around which the city of Amritsar later on grew up. But the general belief is that the grant was made later in 1578,

says G.C. Narang, increased the prestige of the Guru and made his mission more popular with the higher classes of society. Gyani Gian Singh, the author of the *Panth Parkash*, says, "Akbar's doing hamage to the Guru brought crowds of followers to the fold of Sikhism".

Besides, the Emperor also showed great reverence for the Sikh Guru when, after receiving a complaint from the Hindus of Goindwal, he did not press the Guru to come personally to defend his case. He permitted him to send his representative. This was also regarded as a great favour. Similarly, when the Guru and the Sikhs went on pilgrimage to Kurukshetra or Hardwar, the Emperor did not charge the usual pilgrim tax which at that time was charged at the rate of Rs. 1/4/- per head. That patronizing attitude of the Emperor towards the new faith went a long way to promote the growth and popularization of Sikhism.

Thus, the pontificate of Guru Amar Das is quite significant in the history of the development of the Sikh religion. During his period, it "forged its own weapons, hedged itself behind newer forms and customs. In short, it developed an individuality of its own. It was under his auspices that the rudiments of a separate organization were given to the Sikhs, and new forms and practices were introduced to supersede the old, and bind the neophytes more closely together."<sup>1</sup> Indubhushan Banerjee sums up the contribution of Guru Amar Das to the development of Sikh religion in the following words :

Estimate of  
Guru Amar Das's  
Work

"It was under Amar Das that the difference between a Hindu and a Sikh became more pronounced and the Sikhs began gradually to drift away from the orthodox Hindu society and form a class, a sort of new brotherhood by themselves."<sup>2</sup>

Before Guru Amar Das died, he nominated his son-in-law Ram Das, as his successor. It is said that Guru Amar Das was very much impressed by the devotion and piety of his daughter, Bibi Bhani, and of her husband, Ram Das, also called Jetha. Once, when Bibi Bhani severely injured her hand by placing it under a collapsed leg of the *chauki* on which he was seated while taking a bath, the Guru, who was deeply moved and overcome with

1. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Volume I, p. 182
2. *Ibid.*, p. 183



a sense of gratitude, asked Bhani whether there was anything in the world that he could do for her. She then begged her father that the office of the guruship should be made hereditary in her family. The Guru granted the boon and, thus, "The guruship became hereditary in the family of Ram Dass."

### III

#### Guru Ram Das

1574—1581

**Career of Guru Ram Das** Guru Ram Das's original name was Jetha. He was a Khatri of the Sodhi tribe. He was born in Chune Mandi, Lahore, on September 24, 1534. His father's name was Hari Das. From his boyhood, Ram Das showed special fondness for holy men and once, in the company of the Sikhs of Lahore, he came to Goindwal where Guru Amar Das had started the construction of the great 'Baoli'. The Guru and his wife were so much impressed by Ram Das's devotion and service and his handsome features that they married off their younger daughter Bibi Bhani to him. After the marriage, Jetha (Ram Das) did not go back to Lahore but remained with his father-in-law whom he began to regard as his guru. Both Ram Das and his wife served the Guru with utmost devotion. It was, why he, in preference to his sons, Mohan and Mohri, and his elder son-in-law, Rama, conferred the Guruship on Ram Das.

**Foundation of Chak Guru or Ramdaspur (Amritsar) 1577-81** The most notable achievement of the pontificate of Guru Ram Das is the laying of the foundation of the city of Ramdaspur, which is now known as Amritsar. But the historians hold divergent opinions regarding the time when its foundation was actually taken in hand. According to Macauliffe, when Akbar visited Guru Amar Das for the first time, he made a grant of land to his daughter, Bibi Bhani, and the Guru then asked Ram Das, his son-in-law, to shift to those lands and excavate two tanks—Santokhsar and Amritsar—there. Guru Ram Das, then, started the excavation work during the lifetime of Amar Das. But Foster, Latif and Cunningham say that the grant of the land which includes the site of Amritsar was made by Akbar when Guru Ram Das was installed Guru and, consequently, he started the work during his own

pontificate. According to the *Amritsar Gazetteer*, this grant of land was made in 1577, i.e. three years after his accession to the *gaddi*. This land originally belonged to the *Zamindars* of Tung and when Akbar granted 50 *bighas* of land together with the site for Amritsar, he asked the Guru that for the land he should pay Rs. 700 (*Akbari Tankas*) to the owners, i.e. the *Zamindars* of Tung.

From the above, we may conclude that most probably the land on which the present City of Amritsar is built was obtained from Akbar by Guru Ram Das and he started the excavation work near about 1577. The Guru felt that it was difficult to direct the work of excavation from Goindwal and, consequently, he shifted to the new place. Small huts were built near the tank for the Guru and his Sikhs. A few extra huts were built to accommodate the visitors who would come to assist the Guru in that huge work. The result was that a small town in the neighbourhood of the tank grew up and it began to be called 'Chak Guru' or Ramdas-pura. It is said that in order to make it a self-sufficient town, the Guru invited men of fifty-two trades to take up their residence there and open their business in the Guru's market, which is now called Guru-ka-Bazaar.

Regarding the excavation of the tanks, he had in the beginning undertaken to dig two tanks or 'sars'—Santokhsar (Tank of Contentment) and Amritsar (Tank of Nectar). But after some time, he felt that it would be difficult to complete both those works simultaneously. Consequently, he asked his Sikhs to devote their attention, first to complete Amritsar and then to complete the second. Bhai Buddha, the oldest and most devoted Sikh was given the charge to expedite the work. According to Macauliffe, the Guru and Bhai Buddha felt that they must have ample funds if they wanted to complete the whole work within a short period. And it was to meet that difficulty that the Guru sent his Sikhs to different places to spread the Sikh faith and collect their offerings and remit them to the Guru. Thus, according to Macauliffe, originated what later on began to be called the "Masand" system. Mohsan Fani, the author of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, and some of the modern historians, however, say that the 'Masand' system was introduced by Guru Arjan and not by Guru Ram Das. The Masand system might not have been fully organized by Guru Ram Das, but it is certain that it originated during the pontificate of Guru Ram Das, as the 'Masands'

Masands  
'Ram Das'

are called 'Ram Das'. They must have been called by that name only because their office had taken its birth in the time of Guru Ram Das. Besides, Guru Ram Das needed funds very badly and, consequently, he must have sent his Sikhs to distant places to collect them. It may be that the system was not elaborated during his period and that his successor, Guru Arjan, organized it and changed the name of 'Ram Das' to *masand*.

But despite all those efforts on the part of the Guru and Bhai Buddha the work of constructing the tank was not finished during the lifetime of Guru Ram Das. The delay happened because the Guru died at the young age of forty-eight. His successor, Guru Arjan, then completed the whole work.

Besides undertaking that great construction work, the Guru continued the work of spreading the Sikh faith. He is said to have converted one Handal of Jandiala whom he had asked to go and settle in his native village and propagate the new faith. Similarly, he sent Bhai Gurdas to Agra to spread the Sikh faith there. Baba Siri Chand, the elder son of Guru Nanak, is also said to have visited Guru Ram Das and paid his homage to him. Thus, the old rivalry between the two sects of Nanak—Udasis and Sikhs—actually ended in the triumph of Sikhisms. But the credit for this should be given to Guru Ram Das who by his humility<sup>1</sup> and saintliness created such an impression on the mind of the *Udasi* leader that he at once recognized his supremacy.

Guru Ram Das, like Guru Amar Das, was held in high esteem by Emperor Akbar. It was due to that reason that the Guru had obtained a grant of 500 *bighas* of land at a nominal price. It is also said that it was at the Guru's representation that the Emperor remitted the whole land tax for a year to the poor peasants of the Punjab, when they were feeling miserable on account of grain scarcity. This measure immensely "increased the popularity of the Guru among the Jats and the *Zamindars* who flocked round him from all sides, contributing in no small degree

1. It is said that when Siri Chand came to see Guru Ram Dass, the latter with his long bearded wiped the feet of the former as a mark of respect for the son of Guru Nanak. This made Baba Siri Chand recognize the supremacy of the Sikh Guru,

to his power and fame.<sup>1</sup>

Guru Ram Das, before his death, chose his son Arjan Mal as his successor, but that choice of the Guru was greatly resented by Prithi Das or Prithia, the eldest brother of Arjan Mal. He uttered harsh words against his father. But the Guru had chosen Arjan Mal not because he was his son, but because of his devotion and piety. Prithia, however, on account of his self-interest, openly charged his father for showing partiality to Arjan. At last, the Guru ordered him out of his sight and said, "Thou art a *Mina* (a villain with a smiling face). My Sikhs will not obey thee and will never associate with thee." After nominating Arjan, Guru Ram Das left Ranmdaspur (Amritsar) and retired to the old headquarters at Goindwal. After a few day's stay at Goindwal, Guru Ram Das died on September 1, 1581, having held the guruship for seven years. Though he functioned for such a short period, yet he is one of the most revered of the Sikh Gurus.

#### Books for Further Study

1. I. Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Volume 1
  2. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : *A short History of Sikhs*
  3. G. C. Narang : *Transformation of Sikhism*
  4. Cunningham : *History of Sikhs*
  5. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
  6. Archer : *The Sikhs*
  7. Macauliffe : *The Sikh Religion*
  8. Trumpp : *The Adi Granth*
  9. Ibbetson : *Glossary of Punjab Tribes and Castes*
  10. A. C. Banerjee : (introduction only) *Anglo-Sikhs Relations*
  11. Payne : *A Short History of Sikhs*
  12. Bhai Santokh Singh : *Suraj Prakash*
  13. MacGregor : *History of Sikhs*
  14. Malcolm : *Sketch of the Sikhs*
  15. Browne : *Indian Tracts*
  16. Troyer and Shea : *Dabistan-i-Mazaib* of Mohsan Fani
  17. Bhai Mani Singh : *Gyan Ratnawali*
  18. Gyani Gyan Singh : *Panth Prakash*
1. Latif : *History of the Punjab*, pp. 252-253



## CHAPTER VI

### BEGINNING OF SIKH THEOCRACY

#### 1. Guru Arjan (1581—1606) : His career

**Pontificate of Arjan, Very Significant in Sikh History** The pontificate of Guru Arjan is very significant in the history of the Sikhs. It was during his term of office that the Sikhs were provided with a religious book—their Holi Granth. They were no longer to read and recite any stray hymns which they thought to be good. They were given a 'Granth,' a sacred book and they were asked to read the hymns contained in it. Besides, it was also under Guru Arjan that a definite organization of the Sikhs had sprung up. The Sikhs were asked to pay a fixed sum of money to their Guru; and a machinery, the *Masand* System, was set up to collect the contributions from the Sikhs.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, a central temple was built at Ramdaspur (Amritsar) and all the activities of the Sikhs were controlled from that central place. Moreover, Guru Arjan maintained a splendid court and the number of his personal attendants also greatly multiplied. Thus, under Guru Arjan, Sikhism entered on a new phase and "began to assume more definite proportions actually as a new community." It was, as one writer has said, "tending to become a church, a movement within non-ecclesiastical Hinduism, an order by the side of the ecclesiastical Islam and a State within the Empire of Hinduism."

**Career of Guru Arjan** Guru Arjan was the youngest son of Guru Ram Das and Bibi Bhani. His father, Ram Das, had chosen Arjan in preference to his elder sons Prithi Chand and Mahadeo, because he was the most intelligent and devoted of all his relatives and disciples. Arjan was born on April 15, 1563, at Goindwal. He was the favourite grandson of Guru Amar Das and the latter had predicted about his greatness when the former was still a child. He had said that one day Arjan would be

1. Gyan Singh in his *Panth Prakash* says that there is a tradition about the wealthiness of Guru Arjan. "Power and pelf of the world was kept at a distance of 12 miles from Nanak and six miles from Angad. It knocked at the door of Amar Das, fell at the feet of Guru Ram Das, while in Arjan's time, it got admission into the house."

“the ferry-boat of scriptures.” As he grew into manhood, he was married to Ganga, daughter of one Krishan Chand, of the village of Meo in the present-day Phillaur Tehsil. Guru Ram Das, Arjan’s father, did not like his eldest son Prithia, because he was a schemer, dishonest, and even unfaithful to him. His second son, Mahadeo was a recluse and naturally, therefore, he nominated Arjan as his successor. Thus, in 1581, after the death of Ram Das, Arjan was proclaimed Guru.

But Prithi Chand, the eldest brother of Arjan, took a vow not to take rest till he had unseated Arjan from the *Gaddi* of the Guru.

**Hostility of Prithia**

First, he told Arjan that as he was senior to him in age, he had no right to appropriate the property of his father exclusively for his own use. The Guru, thereupon, transferred all the property to Prithia and told him that he, for himself, would in future live only on the offerings of his disciples, the Sikhs. But even that sacrifice did not appease Prithia. He would loot and plunder the Sikhs on their way to Amritsar. He even made alliance with the Mughal official of Lahore, Sulhi Khan, and planned to harm Arjan with the aid of the Government. Guru Arjan felt very much vexed and decided to spend some time in undertaking long tours and propagating the new religion.

For a short while, however, Prithia (‘Mina’ as he was called by the Sikhs) kept quiet. But in 1595, a son was born to Ganga, the wife of the Guru. Prithia and his wife, Karmo, were living in the

**Hostility Intensified because of the Birth of Hargobind**

hope that Guru Arjan would remain childless, and, naturally, therefore, after his death, their own son Mihrban would be installed the Guru. The news of the birth of Hargobind, the son of Arjan, at Wadali, in 1595, once more made Prithia an active and sworn enemy of the Guru. He and his wife resorted to even inhuman methods to satisfy their burning jealousy. Several attempts<sup>1</sup> were made to poison Hargobind, but all failed. Prithia then went to Delhi and reported to Akbar against Guru Arjan’s efforts to compile a *Granth* or sacred book which was against the spirit of Islam, but the kind-hearted and tolerant Emperor did not say anything to the Guru. Thereafter, he began to harass the Guru with the help

1. Three attempts were made on the life of the child Hargobind. First, the old nurse tried to poison him. Secondly, a snake-charmer was sent to throw snake near him. Thirdly, a Brahman was sent to mix poison with the milk to be drunk by him.

of Sulhi Khan, and when Chandu Shah, the finance minister, turned against Arjan for not accepting the proposal of his daughter's betrothal to his son, an unholy alliance of these three—Prithia, Sulhi and Chandu—was formed to persuade the Emperor to inflict drastic punishment on the Guru. But Sulhi met with an accidental death by falling into a live kiln. Prithia, too, died before Chandu had obtained a *farman* or royal order from Jahangir for the death sentence of Guru Arjan.

## II

### Achievement of Guru Arjan : the Adi Granth and the Masand System

But despite the life-long enmity of Prithia, Guru Arjan achieved a good deal during his guruship which lasted for twenty-five years, i.e. from 1581 to 1606. The most notable achievements of his term of office are :

Main Achievements of Guru Arjan

- (a) The completion of Amritsar and the foundation of other cities, such as Taran-Taran and Kartarpur.
- (b) The setting up of a machinery for the collection of tithes from his followers, i.e. the appointment of *Masands*.
- (c) The fostering of trade and industry among Sikhs.
- (d) The compilation of the *Adi Granth*—The Sacred Book of the Sikhs.

As we have already mentioned, the work of excavation of two great tanks—Santokhsar and Amritsar—at Ramdasapur was started by the fourth Guru. After his death, his son Arjan resumed the work. The most trustworthy disciple of the Guru, namely, Bhai Buddha, was appointed to superintend the work of construction. The side-walls and the floor were built with the collective efforts of the Sikhs. When that great "Tank of Nectar" was completed, the Guru decided that a temple should be built in the midst of it. Accordingly, the construction of Har Mandir or the temple of God was taken in hand. Though the Sikhs represented that the temple should be higher than all the other buildings in the neighbourhood, yet the Guru replied that the Har Mandir should be the lowest edifice of all, as "What is humble shall be exalted."

Completion of Amritsar

Besides, the Guru did not keep its door open on one side only, as in the case of Hindu temples. Rather, the doors were provided on all the four sides, thereby indicating that his temple—Har Mandir—was open to all the four castes. After the construction of the tank and the temple was finally completed in 1589, the Guru said, “The pilgrimage to this place has the value of all the sixty-eight Hindu places of pilgrimage.” The Guru not only built a temple in the new town, but also asked his Sikhs to settle in Amritsar, and by way of encouragement, he provided all types of facilities to them. One of his most trustworthy disciples, Bhai Salo, was specially given the duty of seeing that the largest number of Sikhs settled in the new town. The Sikhs, thus settled, were also encouraged to engage in trade and industry. Thus, within a short period, Ramdasapur or Amritsar became a flourishing town. Sir Gokal Chand Narang says that in a very short time, this new city, Ramdasapur or Amritsar, ‘became the capital or metropolis of the infant Commonwealth that the genius of Arjan was gradually and peacefully building up.’<sup>1</sup>

Guru Arjan not only completed the work of his father, but also undertook the construction of several new towns, tanks and edifices. In 1590, the Guru chose a very strategic site for building a new town. In the heart of the Majha Tract or central country, lying between the Rivers Beas and Ravi, Guru Arjan excavated a tank and built a temple which, in course of time, began to be called Taran-Taran.<sup>2</sup> With Taran-Taran and Amritsar as bases for the spread of his faith, Arjan converted a large number of Jats of Majha. Indubhushan Banerjee says that this admission of Jats into the Sikh faith is very significant. The temperament and habits of this new element gradually transformed the Sikh religion into a militant religion; and it is why in the later Sikh history, we hear more of fiery Sikh soldiers ready to fight against the enemy and lay down their lives for the sake of the Guru than the quiet devotees leading pious life and worshipping Name.<sup>3</sup>

Guru Arjan also founded a new city in the Jullundur Doab. It was called Kartarpur. A well was also dug there and it is said

1. Sir G. C. Narang : *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 68

2. Taran-Taran means a raft to take men across the world's ocean.

3. I. Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Vol. 2, p, 35



that the first sod of that well was cut by the Guru with his own hands. That well was called "Gang-Sar" or the 'Ganges-Tank, and the Guru pointed out that the tank was as sacred as the Ganges. During his visit to Lahore, the Guru also constructed a *Baoli* or an oblong well with steps, in Dabbi Bazaar, where the Guru stayed for some time. According to Macauliffe, the cost of the *Baoli* was borne by the Viceroy of Lahore who had been greatly impressed by the saintliness of the Guru and his inspiring message. Guru Arjan also visited Dera Baba Nanak, where, later on, Siri Hargobindpur was founded. He is also said to have spent a few days at Wadali, near Chhehratta, a few miles to the west of Amritsar.

The Guru was not only a great builder, but also a very able organizer. He was the first Guru who devised an elaborate machinery for controlling his disciples and collecting offerings from them. Hitherto, the Gurus depended upon the voluntary offerings of their Sikhs and, consequently, they could form no idea of their financial resources. In view of the uncertainty of the income, they could not undertake any expensive beneficent measures for the betterment of their faith. Besides, owing to the lack of any well-defined machinery of collection, sometimes the offerings of the Sikhs did not always reach the Guru. In order to remove those defects, the Guru reorganized the *Masand* system which Guru Ram Das had first introduced. He laid down that :

(i) In future, the Sikhs were not to give 'Bheint' or 'Nazrana' according to their sweet will. It was made binding on the Sikhs to contribute one-tenth (*daswandh*) of their income to the Guru. These tithes were levied for the maintenance of the infant Sikh Church. But the Sikhs were not to pay these tithes directly to the Guru (or 'Sachcha Padshah') but to his deputy, the *Masand*. It should, however, be remembered that the *Masand* could not use even a penny out of those offerings, as the Guru's warning was that whoever used those offerings, he would come to grief.

(ii) The *Masnad* or *Masand*—the deputy of the Guru—with whom the money was to be deposited, occupied a high position; and it was his responsibility to deposit all that money in the Guru's treasury.

(iii) At the annual Baisakhi fair, the *Masands* were to take

all the money, they had collected, to the central treasury at Amritsar. Regular accounts of the offerings were kept and even receipts were issued to the *Masands*.

(iv) Where the *Masands* did not personally reside, they appointed their own delegates called *Sangatias*, *Masandias* or *Meoras*.<sup>1</sup> Their main function was to collect the *daswandh* or tithe and hand over that money to the *Masand* for depositing in the Guru's treasury.

(v) Besides those financial functions, the *Masands* who were generally men of great piety and integrity also acted as the heads of the Sikh congregations or *Sangats* in their respective areas. They propagated the Sikh faith in the territories under their charge; and when they used to come to the court of the Guru in the month of Baisakh to render accounts of the offerings of their Sikhs, they also submitted a report to the Guru on the socio-religious affairs of their respective "Sangats". Sometimes, they were accompanied by a number of devout Sikhs.

This word 'Masand' is derived from a Persian word *masnad* which means an elevated place. As they were chosen by their

Guru or Sachcha Padshah to act as his deputies, they occupied an elevated position in the *Sangat*, and were called *Masands*. For sometime, the *Masand* System worked very smoothly and efficiently. It ensured a steady flow of resources to the Guru's treasury and also ensured the solidarity of Sikhism. Some of the writers, relying mostly on the wrong interpretation of Mohsan Fani, say that through this *Masand* System the Sikhs acquired a sort of parallel government.<sup>2</sup> Within a few generations, however, the *Masands* grew corrupt. The spirit of faction got the upper hand and they began to neglect their duties; they even misappropriated most of the Sikhs' offerings lying with them. Some of them even went to the extent of conspiring against the Guru. After the death of Guru Harkrishan, the *Masands* created a number of difficulties for Guru Teg Bahadur. Some of them joined Dhir Mal and even attempted to take the life of the Guru. Later on, when the Guru tried to visit the Har Mandir at Amritsar, the *Masands* in charge

1. Ibbetson—*A glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and N.W.F. Province*, Vol. 1. p. 682

2. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : *A short History of the Sikhs*

of the temple shut its doors against him. After the death of Guru Teg Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh abolished the *Masand* System.

Besides setting up a machinery for the collection of funds, Guru Arjan did a good deal to foster trade and industry among the members of the community. Sikhism is a religion of householders and so the Guru wanted his disciples to live a prosperous and happy life. He, therefore, encouraged them to engage in the lucrative horse-trade with the trans-Indus countries. Sir Gokal Chand Narang says that this horse-trade greatly encouraged the Sikh traders and, consequently, 'brought large contributions to the coffers of the Church.' Trumpp, Cunningham and Narang even go to the extent of remarking that the Guru and even some of his deputies, the *Masands*, themselves engaged in horse-trade and credited the profits, thus accruing, to the funds of the Church. But Indubhushan Banerji's careful and

analytical study has proved beyond doubt that there is no evidence which goes to prove that the Guru himself took part in the lucrative horse-trade with the Indus countries.<sup>1</sup> He might have asked some of his Sikh traders to bring a few horses for his household. It is also possible that some of his Sikhs might have been engaged in horse-trade.

Guru's Alleged  
Encouragement  
of Horse-Trade

### III

#### Compilation of the Adi Granth

The most significant achievement of Guru Arjan is the compilation of the Sacred Book of the Sikhs, which is known by the name of the *Adi Granth* or the *Guru Granth* or the *Granth Sahib*. Guru Arjan felt that he must place at the disposal of his disciples a book which should contain the genuine writings and teachings of the Sikh Gurus. Some spade-work had already been done by the second guru, Guru Angad, and also by Baba Mohan, son of the third guru, Guru Amar Das. Guru Arjan, therefore, first decided to get those collections which he knew were in the possession of Baba Mohan, at Goindwal. He sent his two most trustworthy Sikhs, Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Buddha one after the other for that

Compilation of  
the Adi Granth :  
Collection of  
Material

1. Indu Bhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Vol. I. p. 210

purpose, but both of them failed in their mission. At last, Guru Arjan personally went to Goindwal and Mohan could not refuse the request of the Guru. Rather, he felt that the Divine Guru would be the proper custodian of the collections of the early Gurus and he cheerfully handed them over to him. The Guru also held discussion with Baba Mohan on several important points in connection with the hymns of the previous Gurus and then returned to Amritsar with the determination to compile an authoritative work on the Sikh religion.

He not only collected the hymns of the earlier Gurus, but also sent invitations to the leaders of various *bhagti* orders—Hindu and Muslim—to help and acquaint him with the best compositions of their founder masters, so that a standard scripture may be prepared. It is said that the Guru also sent a Sikh named Piara to Ceylon to bring *Paransangli*, which, he had learnt, was composed by Guru Nanak there in that country.<sup>1</sup>

After these preliminaries, the Guru selected a solitary place where *jand* (wild caper) and Indian fig (*pipal*) yielded agreeable shade.<sup>2</sup> A tank, Ramsar, was also built there to add to the natural beauty of that site. Tents were erected there for the Guru, the minstrels, the bards, the saints and the *faqirs* who had come there to assist Guru Arjan in the collection of material for his great work. The site where the compilation of the *Adi Granth* was started is known as Ramsar.

The hymns of the early Gurus, the saints and *Bhakats*, together with Guru Arjan's own compositions and the writings of bards and *bhais*, were finally scribed by Bhai Gurdas Bhalla, as dictated by Guru Arjan. The work took a long time and was finally completed in 1604 and was installed in the Har Mandir in the same year. Bhai Buddha was appointed the first *Granthi* or the headpriest. Bhai Gurdas, the scribe, who himself was a great poet, also composed certain hymns, but they were not included in the *Granth*. Kahna, Chhaju, Shah Hussain and Pilo—four holy men from Lahore—came to Amritsar and requested the Guru to include their hymns, but the Guru did not find them

1. Macauliffe : *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. III, p. 53

2. *Ibid.* Vol. III, p. 59



in conformity with his teachings and so rejected them.<sup>1</sup>

In the final shape, this *Adi* (or original) *Granth* included :<sup>2</sup>

- (a) The hymns of the five Gurus. Later on, the hymns of the ninth guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, were also added. <sup>(iv) The Contributors</sup> Guru Arjan's contribution was the largest, being 2216 hymns.
- (b) The hymns of sixteen *Bhagats* and saints—both Hindus and Musalmans. Prominent among them were Kabir, Farid, Nam Dev, Rav Dass and Dhanna.
- (c) The verses of 'Bhats', the famous among them were Kall, Nall and Mathara.
- (d) The panegyrics of Guru Arjan and his predecessors, as composed by bards like Satta, Balwand and Mardana. One hymn of Sundar was also included.

The book closes with an epilogue called Mundavani, followed by the "Rag Mala," containing a list of *Rags* and *Raginis* (major and minor musical measures). <sup>(v) Epilogue and Appendix</sup>

Most of the hymns in the sacred book are in the Punjabi language of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. <sup>(vi) Language</sup> But in a number of hymns of the *Bhagats*, Hindi, Persian, Gujrati, Marathi and Sanskrit words are used. But these hymns are written in the Gurmukhi script. The verses of the *Bhataks* of the Deccan, such as Nam Dev and Trilochan bear a strong impress of Marathi.

Figures of speech and parables are taken from the *Upanishads*, *Puranas* and even from the Islamic traditions. But the language of the hymns of the Hindu and the Muslim saints was slightly altered so as to make them intelligible to the Punjabi-speaking people.

Except the first few pages which contain Guru Nanak's *Jupji*,

1. Macauliffe : *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. III, pp. 62-63

2. The number of hymns being : (i) Guru Nanak, 976 ; (ii) Guru Angad, 61 ; (iii) Guru Amar Das, 907 ; (iv) Guru Ram Das, 679 ; (v) Guru Arjan, 2216. Sixteen saints and *Bhagats* whose hymns are included in the *Holy Granth* are: (1) Kabir, (2) Trilochan, (3) Beni, (4) Rav Das, (5) Dhanna (6) Nam Dev, (7) Farid, (8) Jai Dev, (9) Bhikan, (10) Sain, (11) Pipa, (12) Ramanand, (13) Parma Nand, (14) Sadhana, (15) Sur Das, (16) Miran Bai.

“Sodar,” “So Purukh” and ‘Kirtan Sohila’, the rest of the book—the *Granth*—is arranged according to thirty-one musical measures or *Rags*<sup>1</sup>. Some of those musical measures which express extreme joy or extreme sadness, such as Deepak, Megh and Hindol were rejected. The hymns under different *Rags* were to be sung strictly according to that particular musical measure.

(vii) Arrange-  
ment

Regarding the manner of arrangement, the plan is that within each ‘Rag’ or musical measure, first, the hymns of Guru Nanak are given. Then, the hymns of the second Guru, the third Guru, the fourth Guru and finally the hymns of Guru Arjan are included. All these Gurus, however, have composed their hymns under the common poetic name of ‘Nanak’. In the same ‘Rag’ or musical measure, after the Gurus’ hymns are given the hymns of saints and *bhakats* followed by the compositions of the bards and the minstrels.

Thus, an authoritative book, containing the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors and other *bhakats* whose views were in agreement with the Sikh religion, was placed in the hands of the Sikhs. This Sacred Book or the *Granth* contained a large number of verses in the praise of the True Lord and the Guru. It also contained a number of hymns which were meant to be recited daily while offering one’s prayers<sup>1</sup>. The *Granth* does not give any biographical sketches of the Gurus nor does it refer to the miracles performed by them. The *Granth* also does not write anything about secular affairs.<sup>2</sup> The Gurus, through their hymns, do not assert or expound their beliefs in order to carry conviction with the readers. Their hymns are, however, very explicit in their beliefs and doctrines and they exhort the reader to hold faith in them on the basis that whatever is contained in the hymns is true. Besides the compilation of the *Granth*, Guru Arjan is said to have issued the decalogue or the ten commandments.

(viii) Nature of  
Contents of the  
Adi Granth

The compilation of *Adi Granth* is a great landmark in the Sikh

1. Dr Trumpp is wrong when he says “Prayer to the Supreme is hardly even mentioned in the *Granth*”. There are a very large number of hymns in the *Granth* which were uttered by their authors in a prayerful mood.

2. Unlike the Quran of the Muslims, the *Adi Granth* contains nothing about the law of inheritance, marriage, will, etc.

history. More than anything else, it created communal consciousness among the Sikhs ; and with a separate book of their own, they finally parted company with their Hindu brethren who would not regard any other book except the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and the *Puranas* as holy. Khushwant Singh in his 'Jup Ji' has summed up, the importance of the *Guru Granth Sahib* in the following words :

**Importance of the Granth** "The *Granth* is a unique historical document. It is perhaps the only kind of writing of a scriptural nature which has preserved without embellishment or misconstruction the original writings of the religious leaders. It has saved the literary works of other poets of the time from the vagaries of human memory. The *Granth Sahib* is the central object of Sikh worship and ritual. In all temples, copies of the *Granth* are placed under a canopy. The book itself is draped in cloth—usually richly embroidered." Despite all this show of respect, "the *Granth Sahib* is not like the idol in a Hindu temple, or the cross in a Catholic Church. It is the source and not the object of prayer or worship. Sikhs revere it because it contains the teachings of their Gurus. It is more a book of divine wisdom than the word of God."<sup>1</sup>

For a student of history, this Holy Book of the Sikhs possesses a priceless treasure of historical data on the social, cultural, religious, political and economic life of the people in the middle of the medieval period. There are graphic accounts given here of the religious and social practices prevalent among the people then. The references to the Lodhi and Mughal Kings of the day are unique. The account of Babar's atrocities at Eminabad, in particular, is found nowhere else. Similarly, very interesting light is thrown on the people's reaction to the working of the Lodhi administration. There is also abundance of information on the conduct and thinking of what may be called the leaders of the society, such as *Brahmans*, *Qazis*, *Jogis*, *Sidhs*, Kings and officials, etc.

#### IV

#### **Relations of Guru Arjan with the Mughal Emperor and Guru Arjan's Martyrdom**

The compilation of the *Adi Granth* gave an opportunity to the enemies of Guru Arjan—Prithia and Sulhi—to make capital out

1. Khushwant Singh : *Jup Ji*, pp. 11-12

of it. Some of the hymns in the *Granth* contained a bold criticism of several Hindu and Muslim perversions. Prithia and Sufi represented to the Emperor that some action should be taken against the Guru. Akbar then issued an order asking the Guru to answer those charges. Consequently, Bhai Buddha and Bhai Gurdas went to the Court, read out certain passages from the *Granth* and the Emperor was so much impressed with the catholicity of the teachings contained in the *Granth* that he remarked. "It is a volume worthy of reverence."

**Guru Arjan and His Relations with the Muslims**

As Emperor Akbar was a tolerant ruler, he held the Guru in high esteem. According to one Muslim contemporaneous historian—Badaoni/Akbar, once personally visited the Guru's place at Goindwal and paid his respects to the Sikh Guru. But despite that friendliness of the Emperor, some of his nobles, particularly those who had some connection with the Punjab affairs, regarded with great jealousy the increasing influence and growing prestige of the Guru. Raja Birbal, one of the great favourites of Akbar, was one of them. According to the Sikh tradition, Birbal demanded a tax at the rate of one rupee per house from the Sikhs and asked the Guru to instruct them to pay it. The Guru refused. Whereupon, the former swore to burn the whole city of Amritsar. But, as ill-luck would have it, Birbal received orders from the Emperor to leave the Punjab at once and wage war against the Yusufzais.

In that war, Birbal was killed.

But with the accession of Jahangir, the relations of the Guru with the Mughal Empire deteriorated. The reasons are not far to seek. In the first instance, Jahangir was not a tolerant ruler and he regarded with great disfavour the popularity of the Sikh religion, as is clear from the following extract from Jahangir's own autobiography, the *Tuzak-i-Jahangiri*.

**Jahangir's Intolerance**

"In Goindwal, which is on the River Bijah (Beas), there was a Hindu, named Arjan, in the garments of sainthood and sanctity, so much so that he captured the fancy of many of the simple-hearted Hindus, and even of the ignorant and foolish followers of Islam by his ways and manners, and they had loudly sounded the drum of his holiness. They called him Guru, and from all sides

**(1)  
Popularity of Guru Arjan's Creed was the Chief Crime**



stupid people crowded to worship and manifest complete faith in him. For three or four generations of spiritual successors, they had kept their shop warm. *Many times, it occurred to me to put a stop to this vain affair or to bring him into the assembly of the people of Islam.*"

Thus, Jahangir was determined to take action against Guru Arjan who, according to him, was having a large following, in which his own co-religionists were included.

Secondly, on the accession of Jahangir, his own son Khusrow had revolted against him. After his defeat, Khusrow had waited on Guru Arjan and sought his blessings. The Guru, in the words of Jahangir, "made on his forehead a mark in saffron, which the Indians (Hinduwan) call 'qashqa' and is considered propitious." Mohsan Fani, the author of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, says that the Guru offered prayers also for Khusrow. But Macauliffe says that nothing of that sort was done. The Guru had only given a few thousand rupees to the unfortunate prince "for the expenses of his proposed flight to Kabul." From the above, it is clear that the Guru had not taken up the side of Khusrow. If it had been so, Jahangir would have clearly mentioned it. On the other hand, he simply says that a 'tilak' was put on his forehead. And, if we believe Mohsan Fani, "prayers were offered for Khusrow". This putting of saffron mark does not imply that the Guru was blessing him with sovereignty. The refugee prince had fallen at the feet of the Guru, and the latter might have, on account of his distinguished personality, honoured him with some special mark. The reports of flatterers might have interpreted that thing in their own way and reported accordingly. And similarly, Mohsan Fani says, "The Guru merely offered prayers for Khusrow. 'Prayer' for what? It does not mean that he offered prayers for his success. He might have offered prayers for his safety, as the prince was being hotly pursued by the Imperialists. In view of all this, we cannot definitely say that the Guru had any complicity with Prince Khusrow in the rebellion. He was executed not because he was "a political offender", but because he was a victim of the religious bigotry of Jahangir, as he himself confesses in his memoirs. "Of course, the shelter given to Khusrow by the Guru, not for any political reason, but just as a matter of a routine affair for a saint, was made an excuse by Jahangir to take a firm action

against him. Chandu Shah, holding a high office under Jahangir, further added fuel to the fire and persuaded Jahangir to put the Guru to death. Chandu Shah had his personal grudge against the Guru which is described in great detail in the Sikh tradition and which, according to the same source, was the principal cause of the martyrdom of Guru Arjan.

(iii)  
Chandu's Personal Grudge against the Guru

The Sikh tradition says that Chandu Shah, the Finance Minister, had a daughter whom he wanted to engage to some respectable Khatri youth. A priest and a barber were sent out to find a suitable match for her. After some time, they returned and reported to Chandu that Hargobind, the son of Guru Arjan, would be the most suitable match for his daughter. The Finance Minister, proud of his position, said some very disparaging words against the Guru. He said, "Do you think that the Guru is equal to my position? He liveth on offerings, which is an ignominious form of livelihood." But Chandu's wife, in the end, persuaded her husband to accept the proposal. Consequently, a formal message was sent to the Guru, requesting him to marry his son to their daughter. But meanwhile, some one reported to the Guru the words Chandu had spoken earlier against him. The Sikhs, on the basis of those words, advised the Guru to reject the offer. The Guru could not go against the wishes of his Sikhs and did accordingly. Chandu, thereafter, became the bitterest enemy of the Guru and when the Emperor Jahangir visited Lahore, he poisoned his ears and even concocted a story of the complicity of Guru Arjan with Khusrow in his revolt.

(iv)  
Jahangir's Hasty and Unwise Decision—and the Martyrdom of Guru Arjan

Jahangir was already thinking of taking action against the Guru because of the latter's religious activities, which did not conform to Islam.<sup>1</sup> And now he was told by Chandu that the Guru had helped Khusrow with money and even offered prayers for his success. Jahangir had, in fact, come to the Punjab to punish Khusrow and his accomplices; and when that charge was levelled against the Guru, he, at once, ordered that the Guru should be brought to his presence. Without any regular trial or

1. Jahangir was not a bigot himself, but he had acquired the throne with the help of the Muslim orthodoxy. Therefore he was in the beginning very much under their influence.

going into the various aspects of the case, he imposed a huge fine of two lakhs of rupees on the Guru and asked him to erase all those passages from the *Granth* which were against the Hindu and Muslim beliefs. The Guru replied that the money he had was meant for the poor, friendless and strangers, and not for making payment to the State in the form of a fine and that he would not erase anything from the *Granth*. Consequently, Jahangir passed orders confiscating all the property of the Guru, and then ordered that he should be put to death with torture<sup>1</sup>. According to certain writers, a Hindu rich man, probably Chandu Shah, made a settlement with the Emperor to pay the huge fine to him and in return took the responsibility of torturing the Guru to death. It is said that even after that judgment, a Muslim saint, Mian Mir, of Lahore, tried to intercede on behalf of the Guru, but Guru Arjan told him to let the Divine Will have its free course. Thus, infinite tortures were inflicted on the Guru and in the words of a Muslim historian, "the Guru died of the heat of the sun and ill-treatment." According to the Sikh tradition, burning sand was poured on the Guru, and even he was seated in cauldrons and bathed in boiling water. The Sikh accounts also say that when he was being tortured, he took leave from his persecutors to bathe in the River Ravi; and there he "vanished in the shallow stream to the fear and wonder of those guarding him." This incident which is known as the martyrdom of Guru Arjan<sup>2</sup> in Sikh history occurred on May 30, 1606.

"This tragic death of the Guru," says Teja Singh, "convinced the Sikhs that they must arm themselves and fight, if they wanted to live." Thus, with the martyrdom of Guru Arjan

**Consequences of  
Guru Arjan's  
Martyrdom** begins the period when the Sikhs, besides striving for spiritual bliss, began to prepare themselves to defend their hearths and homes against the Mughal tyrants. The death of their beloved and innocent Guru taught them a lesson that without political freedom, it was difficult to obtain

1. See *Tuzak-i-Jahangiri*.
2. Sir J. N. Sarkar says that there is nothing abnormal about the execution of Guru Arjan and such punishments were given to the revenue defaulters of the day. Indubhushan Banerjee says that Guru Arjan was not an ordinary revenue defaulter. He was punished, as Jahangir has himself said in his *Memoirs*, for his religious propaganda. Sir J. N. Sarkar in this case has shown a perversity of judgment, which can hardly be excused in a historian.

spiritual salvation. Like the blood of all other martyrs, the blood of Guru Arjan went a long way in bringing home to the Sikhs that they must organize and arm themselves. According to the Sikh tradition, Guru Arjan in his "parting message" to his disciples indicated the future course that his successor, young Hargobind, should follow. He said, "I have succeeded in effecting the object of my life. Go to my son, the holy Hargobind, and give him from me an ample consolation. Bid him not to mourn for me, nor indulge in unmanly lamentations, but sing God's praises...Let him sit fully armed on his throne, and maintain an army to the best of his ability...Let him hold Bhai Buddha in honour, and in all respects, except the wearing of arms hereby enjoined, adopt the practices of the preceding Gurus."<sup>1</sup>

"These last words of Arjun," says Archer, "began to pass through Indian bazaars and along the pilgrim routes, and a change of mood prevailed among the Sikhs. In the greater Garden some plough-shares were being beaten into swords and there were pruning hooks becoming spears." "A fellowship of reconciliation", says the same author, "thus assumed martial form."<sup>2</sup>

### **Books for further study**

1. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*
2. Cunningham : *History of Sikhs*
3. M. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
4. Macauliffe : *The Sikh Religion*
5. *Tuzak-i-Jahangiri*
6. Mohsan Fani : *Darbistan-i-Mazahib*
7. Archer : *The Sikhs*
8. Ibbetson : *Glossary of Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and N. W. F. Province, Volume I*
9. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : *A short History of the Sikhs*
10. Gyan Singh : *Panth Parkash*
11. Khushwant Singh : *Jupji—the Sikh Prayer*
12. Puran Singh : *The book of Ten Masters*
13. V. A. Smith : *Akbar*

1. Macauliffe : *The Sikh Religion, Vol. III, p. 99*  
 2. Archer : *The Sikhs, p. 171*



## CHAPTER VII

### GURU HARGOBIND (1606—1645)

#### I

#### New Policy

The ministry of Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, is a period of great significance in the Sikh history. It is the period of transition during which Sikhism was being transformed from a brotherhood of pious devotees into an organization of soldier-saints. The martyrdom of Guru Arjan had made such a deep impression on his son and successor, Guru Hargobind, who was then a boy of only eleven years of age, that he decided to give practical shape to the parting message of his father, i. e. "Let him sit fully armed on the throne and maintain an army to the best of his ability." The boy Guru perceived that if Sikhism had to survive, it must make certain adjustments in its character and organization. He felt that his Sikhs should lead a pious and righteous life and worship the Name on the one hand, and on the other, they should be physically prepared and trained to bear arms to defend their hearths and homes against the Mughal tyrants. The Guru, therefore, decided to follow that new policy and during the forty years of his pontificate, he was able to achieve the ideal that he had placed before him at the time of his accession to the Guruship.

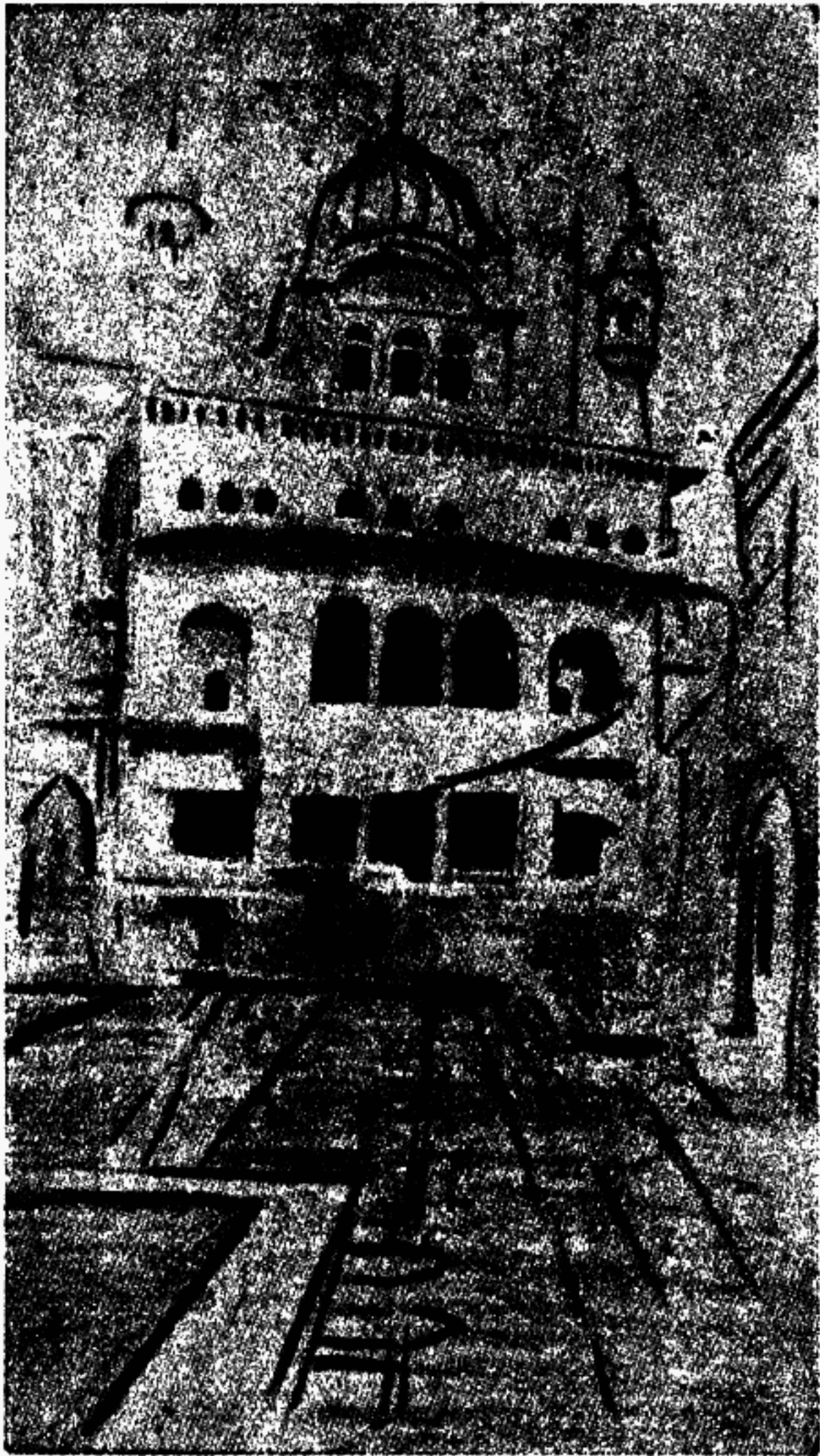
The germs of the new policy may, according to the traditions, be traced to the time when Bhai Buddha, just after Guru Arjan's death, was going to confer guruship on Hargobind. According to the usual custom, he (Bhai Buddha) brought a 'seli' (a woollen cord worn as a rosary by the former Gurus) and a turban and offered to the new Guru to wear them. But Guru Hargobind, putting them aside, said to the head-priest, Bhai Buddha "My 'seli' shall be a sword-belt and I shall wear my turban with a royal aigrette."<sup>1</sup> He told his disciples that in future in the Guru's house "religion and worldly enjoyment shall be combined—the

1. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Vol. IV, p. 2

cauldron to supply the poor and the needy, and the scimitar to smite the oppressors.”

Thus, Guru Hargobind, from the start, tried to play a twofold role—the role of helping his disciples to work for their salvation by worshipping the True Lord on the lines suggested by the first five Gurus and also preparing and training them to bear arms to defend their lives and honour. It was why the Guru began to dress himself in martial style and wore two swords, one representing his ‘Miri’ or secular authority, and the second signifying his ‘Piri’ or spiritual power. Thus, the sixth Guru’s ideal placed before his Sikhs was that they should have an all-round development—the development of the body as well as of the spirit—and his two swords represented that the Guru would, in future, not only guide his Sikhs in their spiritual affairs, but also would lead them, if ever there be a danger to their lives or worldly belongings.

Previously, the Har Mandir at Amritsar was the place where the Guru used to sit and guide his Sikhs and, along with them, sing hymns in praise of God and worship His true Name. But the new policy demanded that, besides spiritual guidance, there should be a throne where the Guru or the True King (*Sachcha Padshah*, as Guru Hargobind had begun to be styled) should sit and guide his disciples in political and worldly affairs. Accordingly, the Guru ordered the construction of a new building at a place which was a few hundred yards away from the Har Mandir. It was completed in 1609 and was named Akal Takht or the Throne of the Timeless (God). It was built of solid brickwork and, being a throne, it was built on a raised platform. It was while sitting on that throne that Guru Hargobind would discuss the political and military problems of the *Panth* or his community. It was also while sitting on that throne that he would watch the wrestling bouts and military feats of his disciples, performed in the open courtyard opposite the Akal Takht. It was also there that the Guru would receive presents and offerings of horses and weapons from his *Masands* and Sikhs. The Akal Takht also served the purpose of a Supreme Court for Sikhs; as all the intricate cases and disputes of the Sikhs were finally decided there by the Guru. Besides the throne, the Guru adopted all other emblems of royalty—the umbrella, the swords, the crest and







the hawk. Thus, he assumed the role of the True King or 'Sachcha Padshah'—a king to all appearances; but in deeds and inward purity as holy and great as any of his predecessors.

Guru Hargobind also maintained a large, gorgeous and well-equipped retinue. Mohsan Fani says that the Guru maintained a big stable of 800 horses. He had three hundred troopers on horseback and sixty men with fire arms ready to lay down their lives for the Guru. Besides them, there was a corps of 500 volunteers who received no salary from the Guru ; but they got horses and weapons from the Guru, took meals from the

(iii)  
The Guru Main-  
tained a Well—  
equipped Retinue

Guru's *langar* or free kitchen, and had sworn themselves to sacrifice their lives for the Guru. As, with the inauguration of the new policy, the Guru required a large number of horses and weapons, he issued an encyclical letter to the *masands* to the effect that he would be pleased with those Sikhs who brought offerings of arms and horses instead of money. As the Guru was very fond of the chase, his retinue included a number of drummers, dogs of the finest breed and some tame leopards.

The Guru, however, did not depend wholly on that small standing army of his body-guards. In course of time, he recruited a large number of mercenaries—mostly malcontents and refugees from the Mugal Government. There was a special force consisting of Pathans, and that was led by Painsa Khan. Also, a small fort was constructed at Amritsar which was named Lohgarh. A wall is also said to have been built round the City.

(iv)  
Construction of  
Amritsar Fort  
(Lohgarh) and  
Having a Force  
of Pathan  
Mercenaries

These major changes in the policy and programme of the Guru naturally involved some adjustment in his day-to-day routine. For example, with the adoption of the policy of armed defence, the Guru began to spend a major portion of his time in the game of the chase. He began to devote a good deal of time to hearing martial music from his minstrel Abdullah. He withdrew all prohibitions on diet, including animal food. He also introduced the practice of choirs circumambulating the Golden Temple in the night "with the blare of trumpets and the flare of torches and the singing of hymns in stirring tunes."

The changes caused great misgivings not only among the people, in general, but also among the Sikhs of the old school.

Bhai Buddha, Bhai Gurdas and even the Guru's mother, Mata Ganga, could not decipher the real meanings of those strange ways of the Master. But none of them felt that the Guru was following the wrong way. They thought the Guru to be infallible. Bhai Gurdas, one of the most pious Sikhs of the old school, sums up his reactions in the following verses :

"People say the former Gurus used to sit in the temple, the present Guru remaineth not in any one place.

The former Emperors used to visit the former Gurus ; the present Guru was sent into a fortress by the Emperor.

The former Gurus, siting on their thrones, used to console the Sikhs ; the present keepeth dogs and hunteth.

I say the Truth within him cannot be concealed ; the true Sikhs, like the bumble-bees, are enamoured of his lotus feet.

He supporteth a burden, intolerable to others and asserjeth not himself".<sup>1</sup>

From this, it is clear that his new mode of life was not even well understood by the Sikhs of the old school. But at the same time, they were convinced of the infallibility and holiness of the Guru.

Some modern writers have not done full justice to Guru Hargobind while assessing the new policy inaugurated by him.

They think that 'the lure of politics and glamour of arms' led him away from the true path of a religious and spiritual leader. These writers do not appreciate the circumstances in which Guru Hargobind was made to modify the policy of his predecessors. Indubhushan Banerjee who has made a thorough and critical study of the Guru's career, says :

"Both externally and internally, the situation was changing and the policy of the Guru had perforce to be adjusted to the new environment. The organisational development of Sikhism had mostly taken place during the tolerant days of Akbar who had never interfered with it ; he had, on the contrary even helped the Gurus in various ways. But the execution of Guru Arjan and Har-

1. Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Vol. II, p. 31

gobind's imprisonment definitely showed that sterner days were ahead and that the policy of the mere peaceful organisation no longer sufficed. Guru Arjan had foreseen and Guru Hargobind also clearly saw that it would no longer be possible to protect the Sikh community and its organisation without the aid of arms ; and the way in which he proceeded to secure this end speaks a good deal for his sagacity and his shrewd political sense.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the Guru adopted his new policy not because he was not as spiritually developed as his predecessors were, but because he, as the head of the new community, felt that the old policy of peaceful organization could no longer protect the infant Sikh church. With the change in policy of the Mughal Emperors towards Sikhism, the Sikhs foresaw that it should be converted from a brotherhood of devotees to a militant sect. If Hargobind had not followed that policy, then his community of pious householders would have either not survived or, at any rate, "relapsed into the limited merit or utility of monks and mendicants."

## II

### Career and Achievements of Guru Hargobind

Indubhushan Banerjee says that the career of Guru Hargobind, after he was selected as Guru, can be conveniently divided into three distinct periods. The first period extends from 1606 to 1627 and it synchronizes with Jahangir's reign. During that period, except for a short interval when the Guru was arrested and imprisoned in the Fort of Gwalior, the Mughal Emperor and the Sikhs were on friendly terms, and, according to Sikh accounts, Guru Hargobind often accompanied Jahangir in hunting and even military expeditions. The second period extends from 1627 to 1634 when Guru Hargobind was mostly engaged in fighting against the Mughals and in all the three battles (those of Amritsar, Lahira and Kartarpur) he eventually got the upper hand over his adversaries. The third period includes the last decade of the career of Guru Hargobind and during that period the Guru lived in Kiratpur in the hills and guided the affairs of his devotees from that place.

Three Distinct  
Periods of His  
Career

1. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Volume II, p. 32

**(a) First Period of Guru Hargobind's Career**

1506—1627

As described elsewhere, Guru Hargobind, immediately after he was installed Guru, adopted the style of a soldier, and the people began to call him 'Sachcha Padshah' or the True King and ordered his Sikhs to bear arms. The official reporters and the enemies of the Guru, particularly Chandu Shah, pointed out to the Emperor Jahangir the implications of the new policy of Guru Horgobind. Jahangir, at last, made up his mind to take a stern action against the Guru. He, therefore, called the Guru and asked him to pay the fine which was imposed upon his father, and which he had not paid. But the Guru, like his father, refused to pay. Thereupon, the Emperor arrested him and ordered that he should be imprisoned in the Gwalior Fort, where generally the important political offenders were kept. The Sikh chroniclers, however, say that the Guru was not arrested. He became a victim of Chandu's intrigue. Chandu had not liked the friendly relations of Jahangir with the Guru and he so conspired<sup>1</sup> as to make Jahangir order that the Guru should be sent to Gwalior to do penance there for the good health and prosperity of the Emperor. But Mohsan Fani's account seems to be more reliable. He says that the Emperor had not liked Guru Hargobind's policy of armed defence and on the pretext of extorting the fine from the Guru, he arrested him and sent him to the Fort of Gwalior.

Though the contemporaries hold divergent views regarding the reasons for sending the Guru to Gwalior, yet all agree that the Guru did spend some time in that Fort. But again the historians do not agree regarding the exact period of his confinement there. Mohsan Fani says that he remained there for 12 years. Indubhushan

Period of  
Imprisonment in  
the Gwalior Fort

1. See Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Volume IV, pp. 8-20. Chandu told Jahangir that the boy Guru had vowed to take revenge on account of his father's execution, and his martial style of living was an ample proof of that. Jahangir then called the Guru to Delhi. When the Guru was at Delhi, Jahangir fell ill, and besides calling physicians he sent for astrologers also to give their advice as to how he could be cured. Chandu bribed an astrologer and made him say before the Emperor that he would be saved only if one of the holiest persons of his State could be sent to the fort of Gwalior to do penance there and, accordingly, the Guru was sent to Gwalior.



Banerjee and Teja Singh, after a careful and analytical study of the important events of Guru Hargobind's career, such as the births of the sons of the Guru, have proved conclusively that the Guru could have, in no way, spent such a long period in the Gwalior Fort. Banerjee says that at the most he remained in the Gwalior Fort for five years from 1607 to 1612. But Teja Singh holds the view that he might have remained in the Fort for two years at the most from 1612 to 1614. According to Sikh tradition, the Guru's period of confinement in the Gwalior Fort was only 'forty days'. On account of such a wide disagreement among historians, it is difficult to determine the exact period of the Gwalior imprisonment of the Guru. This much, however, is certain that the period of confinement was very short and could not be 12 years or even 5 years.

During the period of the confinement of the Guru, the Sikhs made Gwalior their place of pilgrimage. Crowds of them visited Gwalior, touched and kissed the walls of the Fort, within which was confined their persecuted Guru. Some of the devoted Sikhs, like Bhai Jetha, pleaded with the Emperor about the innocence of the Guru. Even a well-placed Mughal official, Wazir Khan, requested Jahangir that the Guru was the victim of a conspiracy and, so should be released. Similarly, some of the Mohammeden saints, such as Mian Mir, for whom Jahangir had great regard, assured the Emperor of the saintliness of the Guru. At last, Jahangir felt that the Guru had suffered because of the evil-minded Chandu and, consequently, ordered that the Guru should be set at liberty. When the orders reached Gwalior, a large number of captive rajahs, who were also imprisoned there, expressed great attachment for the Guru. Consequently, Guru Hargobind informed the Emperor that he would go out of Gwalior only when all other fellow prisoners were also set at liberty. At last, the Emperor yielded and allowed all to go out of the Fort, each holding a part of his cloak. For that noble act, the Guru earned the title of 'Bandi Chhor Baba' or 'a holy deliverer' and a cenotaph bearing this epithet still exists in Gwalior.

From the time of his release to the end of Jahangir's life, the Guru maintained very cordial relations with the Mughal Emperor. As the Emperor had realized that the Guru and his father had suffered a good deal because of Chandu, immediately after the Guru's release, he handed over the latter and his family to him to

punish them in any way he liked. The Guru's Sikhs took away Chandu, tied his hands behind his back, paraded him in the streets of Amritsar and Lahore and in the end some one stabbed him to death. But Chandu's wife and son were set free.

The Sikh traditions tell us that during that period, Jahangir and the Guru's relations were so good that the former visited Amritsar and even offered to bear all the expenses of his new building of Akal Takht. But the Guru declined, saying, "Let me and my Sikhs raise this throne of God with the labour of our own bodies and with the contributions from our own little resources. I wish to make it a symbol of my Sikhs' service and sacrifice, and not a monument to a king's generosity."

Some writers, such as Mohsan Fani, say that Emperor Jahangir even offered a *mansab* of 700 horse and asked him to exercise a supervisory control over the Punjab officials. But the Sikh chroniclers do not subscribe to this view. They say that the Guru accompanied Jahangir on his tours and expeditions in Rajputana and Kashmir not as a *mansabdar* of the Emperor but as his friend. In the face of these divergent views, we can say only this much with certainty that from the day of his release to the death of Jahangir, the Guru and the Sikhs must have been in the good books of the Emperor and during that period the Guru must have increased his military strength without arousing the wrath of the government.

In 1627, Jahangir died and was succeeded by his son Shah Jahan. For sometime, the relations of the new Emperor with Guru Hargobind continued to be friendly. The son of Shah Jahan, Dara Shikoh, was particularly very favourably disposed towards the Guru. But despite all those things, the new militant policy of Guru Hargobind soon brought him in conflict with the Mughals.

First, there took place the case of Kaulan. She was probably the daughter of the *Qazi* of Lahore. She was a religious-minded woman and remained busy in contemplation. After some time, Kaulan became the disciple of Saint Mian Mir. The *Qazi* did not

1. G. C. Narang and Latif say that Kaulan was not the daughter of the *Qazi* of Lahore. The Sikhs, however, unanimously say that she was the daughter of the *Qazi*.

like the odd ways of his daughter and began to ill-treat her.<sup>1</sup> Tired of her father's ill-treatment, she took refuge with the Guru at Amritsar.<sup>2</sup> This case occurred in the reign of Jahangir. The *Qazi* could not prevail upon the Emperor to take action against the Guru because of his (Jahangir's) friendship with the latter. But with the accession of Shah Jahan, the *Qazi* of Lahore again began to represent that a serious action should be taken against the Sikh Guru.

Secondly, the Guru's increasing military strength and, particularly, his enlistment of fugitives, freebooters and malcontents from the imperial army caused great misgivings in the minds of the Mughal officers of the Punjab and they reported that the rising power of that new military sect must be checked immediately. Guru Hargobind's recruitment of Pathan mercenaries, like Paimda Khan, made the Emperor realize that the Guru's aim of taking such people into his fold could be no other than political. And Shah Jahan, therefore, felt obliged to take military action against him.

Thirdly, Shah Jahan immediately after his accession, forbade the conversion of Mohammedans to any other religion, which meant that the Guru must stop preaching his faith to the Muslims. Besides, the Emperor ordered that the 'Baoli' of Guru Arjan should be destroyed and a mosque be erected on its site. The Sikhs and their Guru could not submit to that sacrilege and, thus, a conflict between them and the Emperor became inevitable.

But the immediate cause of the Sikh-Mughal hostilities was the forcible seizure of an imperial hawk by the Sikhs one day in 1628. According to *Bhat Vahis* (bardic accounts), the dates<sup>3</sup> of Guru Hargobind's battles of Amritsar, Lahira and Kartarpur are April 1634 and May 1635 respectively. Shah Jahan was hunting in the neighbourhood of Amritsar. At Guntala (at the site of the present district courts of Amritsar), one of his special

Battle of  
Amritsar: 1628

1. The Guru gave separate quarters to Kaulan and, in order to perpetuate her memory, built a tank 'Kaulsar, which up to this day is known after her name.

2. Latif : *History of the Punjab*, p. 256

3. According to *Bhat Vahis* (bardic accounts), the dates of Guru Hargobind's battles of Amritsar, Lahira and Kartarpur are April 1634, December 1634 and May 1635 respectively

hawks strayed away and was caught by the Sikhs. The imperialists approached the Sikhs and demanded the bird back. But they refused to part with it. This led to an exchange of blows and, in the end, the Mughals were driven away with much slaughter. Shah Jahan could not overlook that disgrace and he sent a large expedition of about 7000 strong under the leadership of Mukhlis Khan to teach a lesson to the Guru and his Sikhs. According to Mohsan Fani, the city of the Guru, *i.e.* Amritsar, was sacked and looted. Even the Guru's property was plundered. Though the Sikhs sustained heavy losses, yet the imperialists could not win a decisive victory and their leader Mukhlis Khan was killed in the battle. But after that battle, the Guru thought it prudent to leave Amritsar. Therefore he retired to Kartarpur. "This battle of Amritsar", says Mohammad Latif, "was the first combat in the annals of the Punjab which was fought between the Mohammedans and the Sikhs."

After a few years, hostilities again broke out between the Mughals and the Sikhs. Then, the immediate cause of the trouble was not a hawk, but two horses. Two **Battle of Lahira: 1631** *masands* of Kabul, Bakht Mal and Tara Chand, were bringing two 'horses of surpassing beauty and fleetness' for the Guru. But on the way, they were seized by the Mughal officials and sent to the Emperor's stables. The Sikhs could not tolerate that action and one of them, Bhai Bidhi Chand, disguised himself as a grass-cutter and entered the royal stable. He brought back one horse and presented it to the Guru. After some time, he again went to the stable, that time in the guise of a 'Khoji', and succeeded in bringing back the second horse also. Bhai Bidhi's daring feats were an eye-opener to the Mughals and they decided to crush the Sikhs completely. Huge military preparations were made and the command of the expedition was entrusted to Qamar Beg. Guru Hargobind, on having come to know of that move, retired to the wastes of Bhatinda, south of the Satluj River. The imperialists marched against him in that direction and a battle was fought near the village of Lahira. Both sides suffered heavily and again the Mughal commander was killed in the fray.

After a short spell of three years' peace, war again broke out between the Sikhs and the Mughals. That time, the trouble started over Painsa Khan. Painsa Khan was a **Battle of Kartarpur: 1634** Pathan mercenary in the service of Guru Hargobind. But in 1634, he quarrelled with the Guru over a



hawk and then left his service and joined the Mughals. The Emperor then sent another big expedition against the Guru, that time commanded by Painsa Khan, and Kale Khan, the brother of Mukhlis Khan. The imperialists marched to Kartarpur where the Guru was staying. The town of Kartarpur was besieged. Bhai Bidhi Chand and Baba Gurdita gave a tough fight and eventually both Kale Khan and Painsa Khan were killed. Thus, the Mughals failed to win even a single decisive victory over the Guru.

But the Guru felt tired of those wars against the Mughals. His real work—the propagation of the teachings of his predecessors—had greatly suffered. He, therefore, decided to find a place of safety from where he could carry on his mission-ary activities. Thus, immediately after the battle of Kartarpur, the Guru left that place and came to Phagwara. But as Phagwara was only about 100 miles from Lahore, he decided to go farther east in the Hill States. While he was, thus, in search of a safe place in the hills, the Raja of Kahlur, impressed with the personality of the Guru, donated him a piece of land. On the site, the Guru built a town which he named Kiratpur, because God's praises (*kirat*) were ever to be sung there. During the last ten years, the Guru suspended armed resistance and engaged himself entirely in religious activities. A large number of the people of the Hill States were converted by him. It is said that even the Rajas of Kulu, Suket, Haripur and Chamba became the Guru's devotees. It was also during that period, probably in 1636, that Gurditta, at the instance of his father, Guru Hargobind, appointed head preachers in different parts of the country. They were Phul, Almast, Gonda and Balu Hassana, and each one of them founded a *dhuan* or hearth and did a lot to spread the message of Sikhism in the area. Similarly, a number of 'Bakhshishes' or bounties were set up for the propagation of the faith.

But during the last ten years of his life, the Guru had to face a number of domestic difficulties. His eldest son Baba Gurditta died in 1638. Gurditta's eldest son, Dhir Mal, openly joined the enemies of the Sikhs and, thus, greatly embittered the last days of

the Guru. Before his death in 1645<sup>1</sup>, the Guru appointed his son, Har Rai, to succeed him. The pontificate of the Guru, thus, lasted for thirty-seven years and ten months. Mohsan Fani says that the Guru was so much loved by his Sikhs that when he died, a large number of them volunteered to burn themselves on his funeral pyre. But they were prevented from doing so by Guru Har Rai. However, two of them—one a Rajput, Raja Ram, and the other a Jat—threw themselves into the flames of the burning pyre and thus expired at the Guru's feet.<sup>2</sup>

Guru Hargobind was a perfect teacher, a real *Guru*. Bhai Gurdas, one of the most learned Sikhs in the court of the Guru in his *Waran* says that Guru Nanak's spirit worked in the Guru and that, like him, he too strove hard for the suffering humanity.<sup>3</sup>

Mohsan Fani, a contemporaneous Muslim historian also says (though, of course, in his own way) that the Guru was a saintly figure and was a great beloved of the devotees of Nanak. But some of the critics, without having a thorough knowledge of the Sikh tradition, try to belittle the position of the Sikh Guru by saying that (a) the Guru left the path of spiritualism which was followed by the earlier Gurus ; and he did not contribute a single verse to the *Holy Granth*, i. e. the Guru fell short of the high ideals that guided his predecessors ; (b) he neglected his religious and spiritual duties and, instead of settling down at one place and guiding his flock, he engaged himself in war and the game of the chase ; (c) he enlisted a large number of persons of questionable antecedents, fugitives, malcontents and even robbers and highway-men and their admission into his fold greatly discredited Sikhism ; (d) he gave shelter to the Mohammedans, the enemies of his faith, and for some time worked in alliance with the Mughal Emperor

1. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh say that the Guru died in 1644. But Indubhushan Banerjee and Macauliffe, relying on Mohsan Fani's evidence, say that he died in 1645. There is no reason why Mohsan Fani, who was present at the time of the Guru's death, should be disbelieved.

2. See Mohsan Fani : *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, Vol. II, pp. 280-281

3. Gurdas in War III says :

'Guru Hargobind, the measureless, churned nectar,

And took his seat on eternal Truth.

He strung the Word of the ungraspable and unknowable Spirit.

Under the Guru's instruction, he filled what could not be filled,  
And dispelled doubt and fear.'

and Mughal authorities of the Punjab.

But Indubhushan Banerjee, who has made a careful and thorough study of the various sources of Guru Hargobind's life, says : "Guru Hargobind appears to have been a much misunderstood man. He was a Guru, a teacher and a protector of his disciples."<sup>1</sup> After the death of Akbar, the Guru foresaw that hard days were ahead for his Sikhs who were not mendicants but householders. And so he felt that if those pious householders were to flourish, they must be inspired with self-confidence and must be trained to bear arms. Thus, sitting on the 'gaddi' of Guru Nanak, Guru Hargobind clearly foresaw that with the change of circumstances, he must also bring a radical change in the outlook of his disciples.

But this does not mean that the Guru gave up the old path. He continued making converts to the new faith and also exhorting his old devotees that their real goal was to attain spiritual salvation and mental equipoise through the worship of the One.

Guru Har Gobind had a lovable personality. During the short period of his confinement in the Gwalior Fort, all the captive rajahs imprisoned there felt so much attached to him that when the order of the Guru's release was known to them, they wept bitterly and told the Guru that it would be difficult for them to suffer the pangs of separation. The Guru then prevailed upon the Mughal Government to release them also along with him. Out of gratitude and love for the Guru, these rajahs styled Hargobind as *Bandi Chhor Baba*. Similarly, a contemporaneous Muslim historian, Mohsan Fani, says that when the Guru died, a large number of Sikhs wanted to burn themselves on the funeral pyre of the Guru and two of them, in spite of Guru Har Rai's dissuasion, threw themselves on the burning pyre. This thing clearly illustrates how much Guru Hargobind was loved by his devotees. Not only did his disciples love him, but even some of the most exalted of the Muslim saints of the time, like Mian Mir, held the Guru in great reverence. Some of the high Mughal *mansabdars*, such as Wazir Khan and Yar Khan, too had very high regard for the Guru and it was particularly owing to the former's

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1. Moshan Fani says that in the battle of Kartarpur, one man tried to attack the Guru, when the latter with his sword cut him into two. While attacking him with his sword, he told the man that he was a Guru, a teacher, and it was his duty to teach him how to use the sword.

influence in Jahangir's court that the Guru and the Sikhs received certain favours from the Emperor.

Guru Hargobind had an equable temper and Mohsan Fani relates a number of anecdotes which clearly illustrate his sense of humour. As has been already described above, his adoption of the policy of armed defence clearly speaks for his foresight, his sagacity and his shrewd political sense. He was also against the display of spiritual powers ; and when his sons, Baba Gurditta and Baba Attal, performed certain miracles (such as the restoring of dead persons to life), he at once ordered them to make amends for those miracles by laying down their lives.

#### **Books for Further Study**

1. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
2. Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Vol. II
3. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Vol. IV
4. Mohsan Fani : *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*
5. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : *A Short History of the Sikhs*
6. Cunningham : *History of Sikhs*
7. Gyan Singh : *Panth Parkash*
8. G. C. Narang : *Transformation of Sikhism*



## CHAPTER VIII

### Peaceful Progress. 1645—1675

#### Guru Har Rai, Guru Har Krishan and Guru Teg Bahadur

##### I

#### Guru Har Rai

1645—1661

Guru Hargobind died in 1645. He had five sons—Baba Gurditta, Suraj Mal, Ani Rai, Baba Atal and Teg Bahadur. From among them, Guru Hargobind had wanted to nominate Baba Gurditta as his successor. But, unfortunately, he died in 1638. Baba Atal and Ani Rai also died during the lifetime of their father. Thus, at the time of his death, Guru Hargobind was left with two sons, Suraj Mal and Teg Bahadur. But the Guru did not nominate either. He thought that Suraj Mal was too worldly and Teg Bahadur too unworldly. Consequently, his choice fell on Har Rai, his grandson (the son of Baba Gurditta) who had impressed him with his piety and kind disposition. Har Rai, however, had an elder brother, Dhir Mal; but his grandfather, Guru Hargobind, took him to be an ‘incarnation’ of Prithia and so, in preference to him, decided to nominate Har Rai as his successor. He was, at that time, only fourteen years old. Macauliffe gives the following description of the consecration ceremony of Guru Har Rai.

“A day was appointed for a great assemblage at which the Guru’s successor was to be consecrated. When all were assembled, Guru Hargobind rose, clasped his hands in an attitude of supplication, and uttered a prayer to the Supreme Being for the success of the day’s proceedings. Then, taking Har Rai by the hand, he seated him on the throne of Guru Nanak. Bhai Bhana, son of Bhai Buddha, affixed the *Tilak* to Har Rai’s forehead and decorated him with a necklace of flowers. The Guru, putting five ‘paise’ and a coconut in a tray, offered them to Har Rai. He then circumambulated him four times, bowed to him and gave him the following instructions : ‘A watch and a quarter before day, shake off sleep, rise, bathe and recite the *Jupji*, which is the Guru’s spell. Be gentle in thy demeanour. Obtrude not thyself, repeat

the Name and cause others to do so. Sit in the company of thy holy Sikhs twice a day." After that, the Guru addressed the Sikhs. 'In Har Rai, now recognize me. The spiritual power of Guru Nanak hath entered him.'<sup>1</sup> Regarding the policy that Guru Har Rai was to follow against the Mughals, Guru Hargobind said to him, "He who proceedeth against thee with enmity in his heart, shall never prevail against thee. Keep two thousand two hundred mounted soldiers ever with thee."

Thus, at the age of fourteen<sup>2</sup>, Guru Har Rai succeeded to the apostleship. By temperament, he was quite different from his grandfather. Though, according to the advice of Guru Hargobind, he maintained a splendid court and a large retinue of 2200 soldiers, yet he had great aversion to war. He preferred the 'solitude of the hills and quiet meditation to the excitement of the chase or the din of the war'. Even when he went out for the game of the chase, he would capture the birds and animals, bring them home and feed them. Thus, in course of time, he established a small zoological garden which, later on, became a source of recreation for his disciples. He was such a tender-hearted man that once, while walking in his garden, his loose cloak broke the stems of some flowers which fell to the ground. The Guru was so much touched by the sight that tears welled up in his eyes and he, thereafter, decided to carry his cloak carefully in his hands when walking in his garden. The greatest trait of the new Guru's character was that no one's feelings should be injured. He often used to recite Farid's famous verse: "All men's hearts are jewels; to distress them is not at all good. If thou desirest the Beloved, distress no one's heart." He was convinced that a temple or a mosque could be repaired, but not the broken heart.

Thus, we find that Guru Har Rai was peaceful by temperament. He gave up the militant policy of his grandfather and devoted himself to the propagation of the faith. He spent most of his time in Kiratpur, where every morning the Guru would hold a religious congregation. During his term of office, many important conversions took place. One *bairagi* monk, Bhagat

Kind-hearted  
Guru

Conversion at  
Kiratpur—  
Bhagat Bhag-  
wan, Pheru and  
Bhai Gonda

1. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Volume IV, pp. 235—236.

2. He was born at Kiratpur in 1630. His mother's name was Nihal Kaur.

Gir, was converted. He was renamed Bhagat Bhagwan and was sent to spread the message of Guru Nanak's creed in the eastern parts of the country. It is said that Bhagat Bhagwan was such a powerful preacher that he established a *Bakhshish* (bounty) in Hindustan with 360 centres or *gaddis*, most of which are still extant. Another important conversion that took place at Kiratpur was that of Bhai Sangatia. He was given the name of Pheru and sent to the Bari Doab to spread Sikhism there. He also established another *Bakhshish*. Similarly, he converted one Bhai Gonda and sent him to Kabul to preach the Sikh faith there. He achieved great success in that country.

The Guru often undertook tours for religious propaganda. In one of his tours, he visited Mukandpur in Jullundur and there drove a bamboo shoot into the ground in memory of his visit. From there, he proceeded to the Malwa territory and stayed for some time at Nathana. It was at that place that the ancestors of the most powerful Sikh families of today "were set on their way to greatness by the fostering care of Har Rai." While the Guru was staying at Nathana, two brothers, Kala and Karam Chand, who had previously received the blessings of the Guru, often used to come to him. One day, when Kala came to the Guru, he brought his two nephews—Sandali and Phul—with him. During that meeting, the Guru's eyes fell on Phul who was slapping his belly with his hand. The Guru asked why he did so. Thereupon, Kala replied that Phul could not speak and, so, whenever he felt hungry, he would slap his belly. The Guru was moved and said, "He shall become great, famous and wealthy. The steeds of his descendants shall drink water as far as the Jamuna. They shall have sovereignty for many generations and be honoured in proportion as they serve the Guru."<sup>1</sup> Kala, later on, took his own sons for getting the blessings of the Guru and it is said that he blessed them, too, and said that his children would have their own cultivation and they would not pay tribute to anyone. The blessings of the Guru bore fruit. Phul's descendants ruled for about two hundred years over the states of Nabha, Jind and Patiala, and till very recently they were called "Phul-ke-Raje" or Phulkian Chiefs. Similarly, the descendants of Kala have for many genera-

Blessed Phul  
and His  
Descendants

1. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Volume IV, p. 294

tions owned 22 villages, called "Bahia" for which they were to pay no land revenue. Another notable convert of the Guru was Bhai Bhagtu.

Thus, Guru Har Rai spent a major portion of his time in the propagation of the Sikh faith. Towards the end of his career, however, he became involved in politics over the question of Dara Shikoh. Dara was the eldest son of Emperor Shah Jahan and an admirer of Guru Har Rai. According to the Sikh chroniclers, once the Guru had even sent a medicine<sup>1</sup> to Dara when he had fallen seriously ill. That medicine cured him and since then, Guru Har Rai and Dara were on friendly terms. But in 1657, a war of succession broke out among the sons of Shah Jahan and, eventually, Dara was defeated by Aurangzeb. Consequently, the former took refuge in the Punjab and incidentally waited upon the Guru for his help and blessings. Historians differ regarding the nature of the help rendered by the Guru at that time. Macauliffe says that Dara came to the Guru simply for having his blessings to have more faith in God and incidentally requested him to impede the progress of Aurangzeb's army as much as possible, so that he might get time to find out a place of safety.<sup>2</sup> Trumpp is of the opinion that Guru Har Rai actually helped Dara with men and money. Sujan Rai, the author of *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*, whose view has been accepted by Indubhushan Banerjee, says that the Guru had joined Dara with his troops, but finding that his cause was hopeless, he left him to his fate and returned to Kartarpur. But it is difficult to endorse this view, as Guru Har Rai, by temperament, was opposed to war ; and, besides, his grandfather had definitely told him not to fight the Mughals. In face of these divergent views, it seems that Dara, during his flight, must have come to the Guru and he might have given him protection for some time or, at the most, asked his Sikhs to impede the progress of Aurangzeb's army which was hotly pursuing Dara.

But that help to Dara, whether passive or active, soon brought the Guru in conflict with Aurangzeb who had become the ruler of Delhi and Agra. Immediately after his accession, he sent for the Guru ; but the latter, instead of going personally, sent his eldest

1. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Vol. IV, p. 279

2. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Volume IV, pp. 302—303



son Ram Rai to Delhi. Aurangzeb asked him why the Gurus in their Holy Book had written against the Musalmans ; and in order to prove that charge, he pointed out a verse in Asa-di-Var of Guru Nanak which reads like this :

“The clay of a Musalman may find its way into the kiln of a potter who makes vessels and bricks out of it. It cries out as it burns.”

Ram Rai, by his cleverness, saved the situation. He said that the original of the text is ‘bei-man’ (faithless) and not Musalman and so that was the mistake of the scribe and not of the Guru. Of course, Ram Rai by this interpretation saved himself from the wrath of the Emperor but, by not showing courage of his convictions, he incurred the wrath of his father. Guru Har Rai declared him unfit for the exalted position of the Guru and decided to nominate his younger son Har Krishan who was just a child of five years. Ram Rai, thereafter, stayed in Delhi. On October 6, 1661, when Guru Har Rai died, Har Krishan was placed on the *gaddi* of Guru Nanak and was styled as the eighth Guru.

## II

### Guru Har Krishana ‘the Child Saint’ 1661-1664

Guru Har Krishan, the eighth Guru, was the second son of Guru Har Rai and his wife Krishan Kaur.<sup>1</sup> He was born at Kiratpur on July 7, 1656. It is said that, while still a child, he gave indications of being worthy of succeeding to the high dignity of his line. His elder brother, Ram Rai, had offended his father by not showing moral courage when called upon by Aurangzeb to interpret certain hymns from the *Adi Granth*. He was, therefore, disinherited and Har Krishna, though still a small child at the time of his father’s death, was nominated for being his successor. He succeeded to the Guruship in 1661. His term of office was short, as he died in 1664. Thus, he was only a child of five when he became the Guru and death removed him when he was only eight. It is, why Guru Har Krishan is generally styled as “the child saint” or the ‘child guru’.

1. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion* Vol. IV, p. 315

Guru Har Krishan's pontificate is comparatively uneventful. The Sikh tradition tells us a number of stories which bear out that the child Guru had acute intellect and great intuitive

**Har Krishan—a Child of Acute Intellect** faculty. He silenced a learned Brahman when the latter put certain questions to him on the *Gita*.

Similarly, when Mirza Raja Jai Singh, a grandee of Aurangzeb, at the instigation of the Emperor, tested the Guru's divine power and asked him to find out the head queen from among a large number of women similarly dressed, Har Krishan came out successful in the trial. He penetrated the disguise, went and took his seat in the lap of the head queen. It is also said that once Aurangzeb caught hold of both the hands of Guru Har Krishan and remarked : "What will you do if now I give you a slap ?" The Guru said, "O King of Kings, he whom you take by one hand, has nothing to fear. What have I to fear, now when you have taken both my hands in your hand." All these stories about the Guru, narrated by Sikh authorities, are not supported by any other independent source. But still, they cannot be rejected summarily. The Sikh traditions unanimously and emphatically point out that their child Guru, Har Krishan, was 'wise beyond his years' and even though a child, 'he used to give his Sikhs instruction, resolve their doubts and lead them on the way to salvation.

One of the notable events of Guru Har Krishan's apostleship is the hostility of his elder brother, Ram Rai. Just as Guru Arjan's

**Ram Rai's Hostility** elder brother Prithia had created troubles for him, Ram Rai swore to dislodge his younger brother from his father's 'gaddi'. Being senior in age Ram Rai

thought that a great injustice had been done him when his father, in preference to his claims, had nominated his younger brother, Har Krishan, to the Guruship. First, he tried to win over the 'Masands' to his side. A large number of them<sup>1</sup>, particularly those who were corrupt and wanted to take advantage of the division in the Guru's family, joined Ram Rai and proclaimed him as the lawful successor of Guru Har Rai. But, despite their efforts, the Sikhs did not acknowledge Ram Rai as their Guru.

When Ram Rai failed to achieve his end with the help of the

1. According to Macauliffe, the leader of the *masands* who joined Ram Raj was Gur Das

corrupt *Masands*, he approached Emperor Aurangzeb<sup>1</sup> for justice. The Emperor then asked Mirza Raja Jai Singh to send for the Guru. Accordingly, the message of the Emperor was conveyed to Guru Har Krishan at Kiratpur. The Guru after consulting his mother and his Sikhs decided to visit Delhi. In 1664, he reached there and stayed with Mirza Raja Jai Singh. The place where the Guru stayed is known as Bangla Sahib and is situated now in New Delhi. It is said that the Guru refused to see the Emperor, telling Raja Jai Singh that his father, the seventh Guru, before his death, had given him instructions not to see the Emperor. There are, however, certain authorities which say that, although in the beginning he refused to see Aurangzeb, he agreed later on to go to the Emperor and the latter, impressed by his divinity, admitted his claim to the Guruship. This view is supported by both Forster and Malcolm.

While Guru Har Krishana was at Delhi, he was seized with smallpox accompanied with high fever. For several days, the Guru remained unconscious in the bed. When one day he regained consciousness, his Sikhs expressed great anxiety. The Guru asked his Sikhs to bring five pice and a coconut. They, consequently, brought those things. Taking them into his hands and waving them three times in the air, he said 'Baba Bakala'. The Sikhs at once followed him. They came to know that the Guru was going to die and he was asking them that his successor, the ninth Guru, lived in the village of Bakala. The Guru died on March 30, 1664, and his body was burnt on the bank of the Jumna, where now stands the Bala Sahib Gurdwara.

### III

#### Guru Tegh Bahadur 1664-1675

Guru Tegh Bahadur was the ninth Sikh Guru. He succeeded to the Guruship in 1664. He was the fifth son of Guru Har Gobind (the sixth Guru) and his wife Nanaki. He was born at Guru-ke-Mahl in the City of Amritsar on April 1, 1622. His father did not nominate Tegh Bahadur as his successor, because he took very

Succession of  
Tegh Bahadur  
in 1664

1. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Volume V, p. 317

little interest in worldly affairs and showed hesitation to shoulder the great responsibility of guiding the affairs of the Sikh Church.

**Makhan Shah Finds out the Guru** But in 1664, when Guru Har Krishana felt that his end was drawing near, he said "Baba Bakala". By that he meant that his next successor, the ninth

Guru, lived at the village of Bakala. But in those days, the office of the Guru was very much coveted by many, as it was a source of great income and prestige. The result was that when the Sikhs came to Bakala to find out their Guru, they, to their surprise, found that a large number<sup>1</sup> of the near relatives of the old Guru, mostly Sodhi Khatri, had proclaimed themselves the Guru and had begun to accept the offerings of the Sikhs. It became difficult for the Sikhs to find out whom they should recognize as the real Guru. At that time, the situation was saved by a Sikh named Makhan Shah. He was a devotee of Guru Nanak and had brought 500 gold *mohars* for the Guru because some time back he had vowed to make that offering to the Guru on escaping a shipwreck. Makhan Shah, then, hit upon a plan to find out the true Guru. Instead of offering 500 gold *mohars*, he placed two *mohars* before every impostor. But when he offered two *mohars* to Tegh Bahadur, the latter asked him that he should offer the remaining 498 also, as he, at the time of the shipwreck, had promised 500. Makhan Shah at once fell at the Guru's feet and proclaimed at the top of his voice "Guru Ladho Re, Gura Ladho Re.", i.e. the Guru is found, the Guru is found. Thereafter, the Sikhs recognized Guru Teg Bahadur as their head.

But most of the Sodhi Khatri, and particularly Dhir Mal, felt very much perturbed at the recognition of Teg Bahadur as the

**Dhir Mal and the Masands' Opposition** Guru. He, along with a few *masands*, the most famous among them being Sihan, even attempted to take the life of the Guru. In fact, the Guru was

shot with a gun and he was seriously hurt. The Sikhs lost their temper, attacked Dhir Mal and looted most of his property, including a copy of the *Guru Granth*. When Guru Teg Bahadur learnt about it, he reprimanded his Sikhs and asked them to return the property of Dhir Mal and his friends. That was done. But the Sikhs did not return the copy of the *Guru Granth* at that time. Later on, when Guru Teg Bahadur learnt about

1. According to certain Sikh writers, twenty-two persons pretended to be the Guru. But this number does not seem to be true.



it, he again expressed his displeasure and the *Granth* was returned to Dhir Mal. Guru Tegh Bahadur often used to say : "Forgiveness is the supreme virtue," and he exhorted his followers to live up to that great ideal.

After a short stay at Bakala, Guru Tegh Bahadur decided to go to Amritsar to have a dip in the 'Tank of Nectar.' But when he just reached near the premises of the Har Mandir, the *Masands*, holding the charge of the sacred temple, shut its doors against him. The *Masands* were corrupt priests and had largely misappropriated the offerings of the Sikhs. They, therefore, did not like to render accounts to the Guru and, consequently, barred his entry in the Har Mandir. Guru Tegh Bahadur, thereupon, is said to have remarked : "The priests of Amritsar are men of blind heart and burn in their own lust of greed." The women of Amritsar then came and apologized to the Guru. They took him to Walla, a village near by, where he stayed for some time.

From Walla, Guru Tegh Bahadur retired to his father's place at Kiratpur. But there, too, his relatives made it impossible for him to live in peace. Dhir Mal, and Ram Rai's followers and the corrupt *Masands* began to harass him. At last, he retired farther into the hills, got a piece of land from the Raja of Kahlur and founded a new city near the village of Makhawal in the neighbourhood of which later on developed the famous town of Anandpur. But even at Anandpur, his relatives, the Sodhi Khatri, created troubles for him and, according to Sikh tradition, he, therefore, set out on a long tour to propagate his faith. It was during that tour that he visited Kurukshetra, Banaras and Patna. At Patna, he joined Mirza Raja Ram Singh and proceeded to Dacca and Assam.

Malcolm and Forster, however, say that the Guru did not voluntarily undertake that tour. According to them, the Guru was called to Delhi because of the intrigues of Ram Rai at the Imperial Court. Aurangzeb wanted to punish him for his activities, but at that time, through the

Guru Tegh Bahadur's Eastern Tour

intercession of a Rajput Chief<sup>1</sup>, he was pardoned on the stipulation that the Raja would take the Guru along with him to the Assam expedition. Accordingly, towards the end of 1655, the Guru accompanied the Rajput Chief who was asked to lead an expedition against Chittagong and Assam. When the Guru reached Patna, he found that his wife Gujarī was about to be confined. He, therefore, left her there and himself continued accompanying the Rajput Chief. Of course, he did not leave her alone. He left his mother Nanaki and his brother-in-law, Kirpal Chand, to look after her.

From Patna, the Guru proceeded to Dacca which was an important centre of Sikhism. There was a 'Hazuri Sangat' (head *sangat*) with minor *sangats* scattered in the neighbourhood of Dacca. The Masand Bulaki, when he came to know that the Guru had come, at once sent a message to all the Sikhs in those parts. Consequently, the Sikhs of the area came in crowds to pay their homage to the Guru and receive his instructions and benedictions. It was at Dacca that the Guru got the happy news of the birth of his son at Patna (Dec. 16, 1666) and, consequently, wrote a letter of thanks to the Sikh 'Sangat' of Patna for their kind treatment of his family. The Guru stayed at Dacca for some time and it is said that he also built a *Dharmshala* or Sikh temple there. Thence, he visited Chhatta-gong, Sondip and Lashkar.

As the Rajput Chief's main target was the conquest of Kamrup or Assam, the Guru eventually reached Assam. It is said that it was because of the Guru's presence that the spells and incantations of the Assamese, for which they were, then, very notorious and through which they had defeated the earlier expedition led by Mir Jumla, failed. The war was however, prolonged. Most of the writers agree that Guru Tegh Bahadur, eventually, played the role of a peace-maker. When both the parties had got tired of war, he invited the soldiers of both the armies at Dhubri and asked them to throw away their weapons.

1. Historians differ radically regarding the name of the raja who interceded at that time. Some writers say that he was Mirza Raja Ram Singh. There are others who say that he was Raja Subal Singh Sisodia. *Suraj Prakash* says that the name of the Raja was Bishan Singh. But of all these views, the first seems to be correct, because the Sisodia Raja went to Bengal earlier, whereas Raja Bishan Singh never went to Assam.

They, then, brought earth with their shields and raised a mound in the memory of Guru Nanak, the Prince of Peace. A Sikh temple marking that spot still stands at the foot of this mound at Dhubri on the bank of the Brahmaputra.

After about two years' stay in Assam, the Guru returned to Patna to join his family, but he did not stay there for long and came back to the Punjab. He again settled at the new town of Makhawal (Anandpur) which he had previously built. After some time, he again set out on a tour and converted a large number of the people of the Malwa region of the Punjab. He converted even a few Mohammedans, such as Saijuddin and a few Pathans of Garhi near Samana.

But those were the days of Aurangzeb who could never permit such activities of a Hindu religious reformer. He, therefore, determined to take action against Guru Tegh Bahadur. According to the Sikh tradition, the Guru became a target of persecution at the hands of Aurangzeb because he had taken up the cause of the Kashmiri Brahmans who had approached him to lead them when Hinduism was in great danger. The Mughal Governor of Kashmir, Sher Afghan, had converted a large number of the Hindus and those who resisted had been massacred in large numbers. The Kashmiri Brahmans, therefore, in despair, had sought the advice and protection of the Guru whom they regarded as the holiest figure among the Hindus of northern India. The Guru, on hearing their representation, began to think seriously regarding what to do. When he was, thus, absorbed in deep thinking, his son Gobind (who along with his mother had also meanwhile come and joined the Guru at Anandpur) asked his father, "Father dear, why sittest thou silently today?" The Guru replied, "Thou knowest nothing yet, thou art still a child...The world is grieved by the oppressions of the Turks. No brave man is to be found. He, who is willing to sacrifice his life, shall free the earth from the burden of the Mohammedans." The child Gobind then at once remarked, "For that purpose, who is more worthy than you who is at once generous, holy and brave? On hearing those remarks, the Guru's mind was made up. He decided to make his own sacrifice for the protection of 'the frontal mark and the sacrificial thread of the Hindus.'" He then informed the Kashmiri Brahmans to go and tell Aurangzeb.

Sikh Version regarding the Reasons of the Arrest of the Guru

"Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, is seated on the throne of the great Guru Nanak, who is the protector of the Hindu faith and religion. First make him a Musalman and then all the people, including ourselves, will, of our own accord, adopt your faith." The Kashmiri Brahamans did accordingly. Aurangzeb<sup>1</sup> then sent his emissaries to Anandpur to summon the Guru to Delhi. But he would not go with them. He, however, promised to follow them. Professor Puran Singh says, "He had yet to go to see his disciples who were thirsting for him, those that lived on his way to Delhi. He took his own time and his own road." This caused suspicion in the minds of the Mughals, and Aurangzeb ordered that he should be searched and arrested. The Guru was then found at Agra and, along with his five chosen disciples, was arrested and brought to Delhi where, he along with his companions, was thrown into prison.

But certain writers<sup>2</sup>, such as Trumpp and Cunningham, relying mostly on Ghulam Hussain's *Siyar-ul-Mutakhrin*, say that the Guru was not arrested and imprisoned because of his religious beliefs, but because he, with his armed followers, had begun to live on plunder. A Muslim Faqir, Hafiz Adam, also joined the Guru in that programme of plunder and rapine. Thus, according to these writers, the orders for the arrest of the Guru were issued because he had laid waste the whole of the Punjab. But Indubushan Banerjee, after a careful study of both the versions—i.e. of the Sikh chroniclers and the account of *Siyar-ul-Mutakhrin*—concludes that the Guru suffered not because of political reasons but because of his religious activities. He says, "We are definitely told that Tegh Bahadur was naturally of a peaceful disposition, that he had lived the life of a recluse prior to his nomination to the Guruship and that he preferred to be called 'Degh Bahadur' instead of 'Tegh Bahadur'. His spirit of forbearance and his love of peace are clearly brought out in the manner in which he sought to meet the intrigues of his kinsmen and those of the *Masands*, and his writings unmistakably testify to the saintliness of his character. In face of all these points, we find it difficult to accept the statements

1. It is now known for certain that Aurangzeb was not there at Delhi. But there is little doubt that what happened had his approval.

2. Macauliffe : *The Sikh Religion*, Volume IV, pp. 371-372.

Also see Sukha Singh's *Gur Bilas*.



of a writer, who wrote more than a hundred years after the event."<sup>1</sup> Macauliffe also says that the circumstances related by Ghulam Husain and Trumpp "are utterly incompatible with the whole tenor of Guru Tegh Bahadur's life and writings and cannot be accepted as even an approach to history."<sup>2</sup> Thus, it is safe to conclude that Guru Tegh Bahadur fell a victim to the religious bigotry of Aurangzeb.

The Guru remained in prison for some time and it is said that during that period of imprisonment Aurangzeb asked him either to embrace Islam or show some miracle, in case he was a true Guru. **Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur** Mohammad Latif says that the Guru expressed his readiness to show a miracle in proof of the alleged divinity of his mission. He wrote on a piece of paper which, he said, was charmed, and then having tied it round his neck declared that the sword would fall harmlessly on it by the effect of the charm which was written upon it. The executioner was then summoned to test the miraculous charm. The blow was given and the head of the Guru rolled on the floor to the amazement of all present there. The paper was then read and it contained these words, "Sir dia, par sirr na dia", meaning that "he had given his head, but not his secret."<sup>3</sup> The Guru's chosen companion, Bhai Mati Dass, was sawn into two at Delhi, as if he were a log of wood. The executions of Tegh Bahadur and his devoted Sikh, Mati Dass, occurred in 1675.

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur is a great landmark in the Sikh history. "His execution", says G. C. Narang, "was universally regarded by the Hindus as a sacrifice for their faith. The whole of the Punjab began to burn with indignation and revenge."<sup>4</sup> The Sikhs and their leader, the youthful Gobind, finally decided to carry on the policy and programme of Guru Hargobind to its logical conclusion, i.e. to convert the peaceful sect of the devotees into a well-disciplined and well-organized military order.

By sacrificing his life, the Guru saved the Hindu religion. His son, Guru Gobind Singh, in his autobiography *Vachitra Natak*,

1. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Volume II, p. 63
2. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Volume IV, p. 332
3. Latif : *History of the Punjab*, p. 260
4. G. C. Narange : *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 116

writes that his father died for the protection of "the frontal mark and the sacred thread of the Hindus." With the tragic death of such a saintly figure as Guru Tegh Bahadur, all the Hindus of the Punjab were stirred to the inmost recesses of their hearts and they took a vow not to submit to the tyranny of the Mughals and fight them to the last to save their honour and religion. Thus, a great storm arose in the Punjab after the martyrdom of the Guru and that storm carried off the Empire of Aurangzeb, as if it were a dead leaf lying on the road.

Guru Tegh Bahadur, like the first five Gurus, was a great poet and some of his hymns were added to the *Adi Granth*, the sacred book of the Sikhs. "Tegh Bahadur," says Professor Puran Singh, "always sings the sorrows of created life and converts them into a vision of heaven—a joy of self-realization. He finds joy nowhere but in this 'Nam' and Praise and exhorts everyone to be of that spirit." The keynote of his message is "Forget yourselves, O people, but forget not the Beloved. Forget not in your gifts, the Great Giver." Some of his hymns have such a powerful appeal that one begins to feel that one's soul is being lifted. They bestow upon the hearers such a repose which even death cannot shake. His songs are the greatest solace ever uttered by a martyr.

**Tegh Bahadur  
as a Poet**

#### **Books for Further Study**

1. Indubhushan Banerjee—*Evolution of Khalsa*, Volume II
2. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh—*A short History of Sikhs*
8. Cunningham—*History of Sikhs*
4. M. Latif—*History of the Punjab*
5. Macauliffe—*The Sikh Religion*
6. Puran Singh—*The Book of Ten Masters*
7. Khazan Singh—*History and Philosophy of Sikh Religion*
8. G. C. Narang—*Transformation of Sikhism*
9. Trilochan Singh—*Guru Tegh Bahadur*
10. Khushwant Singh—*A History of the Sikhs*



**CHAPTER IX**  
**GURU GOBIND SINGH**  
**1675-1708**

**I**  
**Career of Gobind Singh**

**His Birth at Patna : 1666** Guru Gobind Singh—the tenth and last of the Sikh Gurus—was born at Patna on December 26, 1666.<sup>1</sup> He was the only son of Guru Teg Bahadur. At the time of his birth, his father was not present at Patna. He had gone to Assam. So, the child was looked after for some time by his mother Gujri and his maternal uncle Kirpal. Guru Tegh Bahadur on his way back from Assam spent a few months at Patna. As he was anxious to return to the Punjab at the earliest, he left Patna for Makhwal, leaving the family behind at Patna.

**Early Education** Thus, Guru Gobind Singh's first six years were spent at Patna. During the period of childhood, he showed great taste for many feats. He played with the toys which were imitation of bows, arrows and other arms. His favourite games were sham fights. Khazan Singh says, "He (child Gobind) organized regular troops of boys. For their pay, cowries and pice were disbursed and they were feasted with sweetmeats. He also acted as a judge, holding regular courts, while his playmates appeared before him as litigants."<sup>2</sup> It was also in those impressionable years that he picked up Hindi words and developed a special taste for the Hindi language.

In 1673, however, Guru Tegh Bahadur sent for his family from Patna and, thus, Gobind Rai, as he was then called, came to Anandpur. There, the father made suitable arrangements for the education and training of his promising son. Bajar Singh, a Rajput, was appointed to teach him riding and military exercises.

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1. There is some controversy about the date of birth of Guru Gobind Singh. A number of dates have been suggested, such as 1661, 1666, 1668 and 1669. But 1666 commands a wider acceptance than any other date.

2. Khazan Singh : *History and Philosophy of Sikh Religion*, part I, p. 162



Pir Muhammad was asked to teach him Persian and Bhai Gurbakhsh Singh undertook to teach him Gurmukhi. Within a remarkably short time, Gobind learnt Persian and Gurmukhi and also became a fine swordsman. His mental development at that tender age is borne out by the fact that at the age of nine, he suggested to his father to sacrifice his life to save Hinduism in those critical days. The words of his son so touched the heart of Guru Tegh Bahadur that he decided to go to Delhi to lay down his life for the protection of the Hindu religion.

Thus, Gobind Singh was only nine years old when his father was tortured and executed by Aurangzeb. His first thought, naturally, was how to avenge his father's execution. However, it was not yet possible for the Guru to organize any active resistance against the Mughal tyrant. First, he himself was a boy and, so, felt a natural handicap in leading his men and declaring an open war against one of the great empires of the world of those times. Secondly, his brethren, the Hindus, on account of centuries of alien rule and the caste or class prejudices, had become so weak and submissive that they would not take up arms to fight the alien tyranny. Thirdly, his followers, the Sikhs, too had been so much overawed by the high-handedness of Aurangzeb that at the time of the martyrdom of his father, most of them had left him and had fled to places of safety in the hills. Besides, there were a number of sub-sects among the Sikhs, mostly comprising the descendants of the previous Gurus whose claims to guruship had been superseded; and those sub-sects were looking forward to an opportunity to overthrow the child Guru and usurp all power from him. The important groups of those types were Minas, Dhirmalias and Ram-Rais.

But, despite such difficulties, the Guru was determined to take steps to avenge his father's death and also to inspire his countrymen to rise and resist the tyranny of the Mughals. Thus, there were two powerful impulses which made him an irreconcilable foe of the Mughals—one, the impulse of avenging his own wrongs, *i.e.* his father's unjust execution, and the other, to avenge his country's wrongs. With that clear-cut goal before him, he 'resolved upon awakening his followers to a new life, and finally decided that his Sikhs or devotees should also be taught to wield the sword to defend themselves, their religion and their country.'

**The Guru's Determination—  
Two Impulses**

Indubhushan Banerjee divides the career of Guru Gobind Singh from the period of his installation on the *gaddi* to his death into two distinct periods:

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|--|---|
| Pre-Khalsa and<br>Post-Khalsa<br>Periods | (i) the pre-Khalsa period which extended from 1675 to 1699, and<br>(ii) the post-Khalsa period from 1699 till his death which occurred in 1708. |
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During the pre-Khalsa period, the Guru's increasing popularity and power aroused the jealousy of the hill chiefs who, consequently, declared war against him. But they were defeated. After that, some of the hill chiefs contracted friendship with the Guru and, in alliance with him, revolted against the Mughals. In that period, the Mughals failed to subdue the Guru completely. In 1699, the Guru created the Khalsa and the Sikhs (disciples) were thus turned into *singhs* or lions. Then, the hill chiefs, in alliance with the Mughals, waged a war against the Guru who was forced to leave his fort at Anandpur. The Guru suffered many hardships and all his four sons were killed in the war. After the death of Aurangzeb, the Guru maintained cordial relations with his successor Bahadur Shah. It is said that the Guru even accompanied Bahadur Shah to the Deccan. On the way, he was stabbed by a Pathan at Nander and died in 1708.

## II

### The Pre-Khalsa Period

1675—1699

Guru Gobind Shifts to Paonta	The first thing that the Guru had to do after the assumption of the pontificate was to save himself from the wrath of the Mughal Emperor. He left Makhawal, his father's headquarters, and shifted farther into the hills. He settled at Paonta, a beautiful place on the bank of the Jumna in the present-day Nahan State. Some writers, however, say that he did not shift to Paonta because of the fear of the Mughals, but because Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspur and the Guru fell out over the question of an elephant <sup>1</sup> and, conse-
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1. According to Sikhs tradition, Raja Bhim Chand demanded a beautiful elephant from the Guru. That elephant had been presented to him by a Sikh and the Guru refused to part with it.

quently, the latter being a subject of the former, had to leave Makhawal and find out another place of safety.

There, at Paonta, the young Gobind Rai began to think about the hardships and sufferings of his countrymen. He felt that they were the victims of two types of tyranny. First, the political tyranny of the alien rulers, who would not grant them even the elementary rights of citizenship – freedom of religion, and the security of life, honour and property. Secondly, the religious tyranny of the priestly class, the Brahamans, who, through a religion of empty rituals, had been for centuries exploiting the ignorant and superstitious Hindus to their advantage. A writer has rightly observed, “The political tyranny was discriminate and occasional; but the religious tyranny was indiscriminate and continual, being practised every day in kitchens, at the village wells, in temples and at hundreds of other places of mutual resort.”<sup>1</sup> The Guru, therefore, decided to give a bold and determined fight to both the religious and the political tyrannies. As a first step to achieve those ends, he tried to acquaint and equip himself with every type of knowledge. He went through the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and gained a good deal of knowledge from the incidents and stories in the great epics. He even got translated some of the portions of these great works into Hindi and Gurmukhi in order to foster a new spirit of self-reliance among his followers and, thus, “to steel their hearts against injustice and tyranny.”

In this great literary programme, the *Guru was assisted by as many as fifty-two poets of great eminence*. It was in the course of those literary pursuits that Guru Gobind Singh had ‘developed a style which, for martial cadence, variety of forms and richness of imagination, has remained unsurpassed since his times’.

Besides awakening his men through literature, Guru Gobind Singh began to exhort them to pay proper attention to their bodies. They were asked to take active interest in all kinds of sports ; and it is said that he began to train them in riding, archery and sword-play. He also enlisted some Pathan mercenaries in his army to increase his strength and also to give his followers further

**Guru Gobind's  
Analysis of  
Tyranny: Political and Religious**

**Tried to Gain  
knowledge through Literature**

**He Began to Give  
Military Training  
to His Followers**

1. See Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : *A Short History of Sikhs*, p. 63

training in the methods of warfare.

These activities of Guru Gobind Singh excited the jealousy and fear of the neighbouring hill-chiefs and, consequently, Fateh Shah of Sirinagar and some other Rajput princes formed an alliance and attacked Paonta. Guru Gobind Singh, with his small force, advanced to meet the allied forces. A hard-contested battle was fought at Bhangani, a place at a distance of about six miles from Paonta. In the initial stages, the Guru's forces suffered some reverses on account of the desertion of his Pathan mercenaries. But soon Budhu Shah of Sadhaura, with his sons and disciples, joined the Guru ; and, consequently, the balance was turned in his favour. In his autobiography, *Bachitra Natak*, the Guru has given a graphic description of the battle. He describes how he himself led his forces and killed the two great generals of the enemies, namely, Bhikan Khan and Hari Chand. With the death of their generals, the army of the hill chief lost heart and began to retreat. This battle was fought in September 1688, and is very significant in the career of Guru Gobind Singh, as the victory in that battle instilled a great hope and confidence among his followers. It convinced them that, if properly organized and trained, they would be able to fight successfully against every type of tyranny. The Guru thereafter also decided to leave his hilly retreat of Paonta and again returned to Kahlur where he settled at Anandpur or the 'City of Joy'. Besides, the tough fight that the Guru had given at Bhangani made a deep impression upon the Hill Rajas and they 'now began to regard the Guru's power with the seriousness it deserved'.

As mentioned above, Guru Gobind Singh, immediately after the victory of Bhangani, left Paonta and again shifted to the territory of the Kahlur Chief. He made Anandpur his headquarters and also raised four small forts—Anandgarh, Lohgarh, Keshgarh, and Fatehagarh—around it. Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur, instead of taking action against the Guru, thought it prudent to contract friendship with him. That friendship was later on converted into a powerful alliance and, consequently, Bhim Chand, along with some other hill chiefs, raised the standard of revolt and refused to remit the yearly tribute to Aurangzeb. The Mughal Emperor was at that time away in the Deccan. Bhim Chand and his allied hill chiefs wanted to take full advantage of



Aurangzeb's absence. Guru Gobind Singh had also been won over for similar reasons. But that friendship and alliance of the Guru with the hill chiefs<sup>1</sup> brought him into direct conflict with the Mughals.

#### **Battle of Nadaun**

A large Mughal force, under Alif Khan invaded the territory of the hill chiefs. A bloody battle was fought at Nadaun, a small town on the left bank of the River Beas, about 20 miles south-east of the town of Kangra. The Guru and the hill chiefs fought desperately and in the end succeeded in repulsing the Mughal attack. Most of the hill chiefs, however, soon after that battle patched up their differences with the Mughals and made some settlement with the Governor of Kangra. But the Guru and some of his allies refused to submit. Accordingly, a force under the son of the local *Faujdar* Dilawar Khan marched against the Guru, who defeated him. Two other expeditions under Hussain Khan and Jujhar Singh were sent by the Mughal Governor, but they, too, suffered the same fate.

The news of these repeated disasters at last reached the Emperor in the Deccan. He, thereupon, asked his son, Prince Muazzam, to pay personal attention to those rebellions in the Punjab hills. The Prince came to Lahore and sent a large force under Mirza Beg against the Guru and the hill chiefs. Mirza Beg won a complete success and reduced all the hill chiefs to submission. But this did not cause any harm to Guru Gobind Singh. It is said that it was mainly due to the influence of Bhai Nand Lal, Mir Munshi of Prince Muazzam, that large-scale and effective measures were not taken against the Guru. Bhai Nand Lal was a devotee of Guru Gobind Singh and he told his master that it was not proper on his part to wage a regular war against saints, and particularly the saints who were favourably disposed towards the house of Babar. Probably, his reference was to the remarks of the Guru in *Bachittar Natak*, which, in translation, read as follows :

“The Houses of Baba Nanak and Babar—

Both derive their authority from God Himself.

Recognize the former as supreme in religion,

And the latter Supreme in secular affairs.”

1. Two hill Chiefs, Raja Kirpal of Kangra and Raja Dayal of Bhijharmal, did not join Bhim Chand.

Thus, probably because of Bhai Nand Lal's influence in the court of the Prince, the Guru got some breathing-space and, during that period, he reorganized his followers and created what is known as the 'Khalsa.'

### III

#### Founding of the Khalsa 1699

In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh took a momentous step. As referred to above, the young Gobind had much earlier made up his mind to instil a new spirit of courage and confidence among his followers, so that when called upon they should take up arms and fight the political and religious tyranny to which their brethren had long been subjected. His wars with the hill chiefs and the Mughal generals had further convinced him that his Sikhs, besides handling the rosary, could also successfully wield the sword ; and, consequently, in 1699, he convened an assembly of his followers at Anandpur and created the 'Khalsa'. All his disciples thereafter were to undergo a baptism of the sword and instead of leading the life of pious devotees (*sikhs* or *shishs*), they were to live as soldier-saints.

Some writers, however, say that before Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa, he made a sacrifice to a Hindu Devi, Durga, the goddess of power, with a view to getting her blessings for the sword which he wanted to put into the hands of his disciples. Different versions have been given regarding the worship of Durga by the Guru. According to Sukha Singh, the author of *Guru Bilas*, the Guru performed the 'Havana' ceremony on the bank of the River Satluj. A well-known Brahman, Datta Nand of Ujjain, presided over it and the Guru even sacrificed one of his Sikhs to get the blessings of the goddess. In the end, Durga appeared and gave him her sword. Bhai Gyan Singh, the author of *Panth Parkash*, however, says that this sacrifice or 'hom' was performed at Naina Devi by one Kesho Pandit from Banaras. But in Gyan Singh's view, the sacrifice was performed not to win the favour of the goddess but to demonstrate the futility of the sacrifice and the worship of Devis. Keeping in view the teachings of the Sikh Gurus with regard to the unity of Godhead and the repeated emphasis of Guru Gobind Singh in his writings to

worship none but one True Lord, it seems unthinkable to expect the Guru worshipping the goddess Durga to gain her favour and blessings. He might have arranged this ceremony of worshipping the Devi to prove its futility and then to tell his followers that the goddess of power or *shakti* is not Durga, but the sword.

Thus, it was in order to emphasize the importance of the sword, Guru Gobind Singh convened an assembly at Anandpur in 1699. It met on the Baisakhi day and was attended by as many as 80,000 men. It assembled at the site which is now known as Kesh-Garh. When all were seated, the Guru stood up, drew the sword from its scabbard and said, "Is there anyone who would lay down his life for *dharma*?" There was no immediate response, and the Guru had to repeat those words three times. At the third call, one Daya Ram, a J'atri of Lahore, came forward and offered himself for the sacrifice. The Guru took him to an adjoining tent where he had already kept five goats. Daya Ram was left there but a goat's head was cut off by the Guru with his own sword and then the dripping weapon was brought before the assembly. He again asked for another person for sacrifice. That time, the audience was much more terror-stricken than before. But, again at the third call, a Jat of Delhi, Dharm Das, volunteered himself for the sacrifice. Dharm Das was similarly taken to the tent and left there and the Guru, after cutting off another goat's head, again came to the assembly to demand another person for the sacrifice. Thus, in that manner, five persons in all were taken from that assembly. They had all volunteered themselves to die at the Guru's bidding. They are known in Sikh history as 'Panj Piaras' or the 'Five Beloved Ones'; and they are Daya Ram, Dharm Chand, Mokham Chand, Sahib Chand, and Himmat Rai. All the five were attired in a uniform and brought before the assembly. Then, in the presence of the huge gathering, the Guru initiated them into the Khalsa Panth in a novel way.

The method of initiation which had hitherto been current among the Sikhs was the 'Charan Pahaul, i.e. the feet or the toes of the Guru were washed in water and the disciples were required to drink a portion of it. In the early stages of Sikhism, this 'Charan Pahaul' continued to be the common method of initiation. But from

**Baptism of the  
Sword—  
"Khande-Ka-  
Pahaul"**

the time of Guru Arjan, we find that a vessel of water was placed under the 'manja' or couch of the Guru and then that water was given to the initiates. But, Guru Gobind Singh further changed the initiation ceremony and, in place of the old 'pahaul', introduced 'Khande-ka-Pahaul' or 'Baptism of the Sword' and his Five Beloved Ones were initiated into the new cult, according to a novel ceremony, which, in brief, is described below :

An iron vessel, filled with water containing porous sugar lumps (*patashas*), was placed before the Guru. The water was stirred with a double-edged dagger by one of the *Panj Piaras*.

**The Khalsa—  
His Duties**

The sacred hymns of the Gurus from the *Adi Granth*, namely, *Jupji* and *Anand*, and the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh, namely, *Jap Sahib*, *Chaupai* and *sawayas* were recited simultaneously. The water, thus prepared, was named *Amrit* or the 'Sacred Water of Immortality'. It was sprinkled on their faces and they were also given five palmfuls of it to drink.

After passing through this 'Baptism of the Sword', the selected five of Guru Gobind Singh were termed the Khalsa or the Purified Ones and they were to be named as 'singhs' or lions. Thus, Daya Ram became Daya Singh, Dharm Das became Dharm Singh, and so on. They were then asked to wear five K's, viz. :

- (i) *Kes* (unshorn hair)
- (ii) *kachh* (a pair of shorts)
- (iii) *kara* (iron bangle)
- (iv) *kirpan* (sword) and
- (v) *kangha* (comb)

Malcolm says that besides these, they were to wear five arms: a sword, a fire-stick, a bow, an arrow and a pike.

The Guru then explained how his Khalsa was to live in this world. They were all equal and were not to indulge in caste prejudices. They were free to marry among themselves without any caste considerations. But they were to have no social or matrimonial relations with smokers, with persons who shaved, with persons who killed their daughters, and with the descendants or followers of Prithi Chand, Dhir Mal, Ram Rai and those *masands* who had fallen away from the tenets and principles of Guru Nanak. They were not to smoke tobacco, nor cut their hair. They were not to look lustfully at any woman and had to remain content with their own wives.



They were not to worship idols, cemeteries or cremation grounds. They were to rise at dawn, bathe and recite the hymns of the Gurus. They were to have faith only in one Immortal God. And, above all, they were to sacrifice everything for the Guru. They were to sacrifice (a) their old occupation (*Krihnash*), (b) their family ties (*Kulnash*), (c) their old religious beliefs (*Dharamnash*), and (d) their old practices and customs (*Karmanash and Ritnash*). Thus, his Khalsa was to merge itself completely into the Guru.

**The Khalsa was Merged into the Guru**

But that was not all. After he had baptized his chosen five, Guru Gobind Singh himself stood up and asked them (his Five Beloved Ones) to initiate him into the new cult in the same manner. Thus, the Guru was also administered 'Khande-ka Pahaul' and just as he had merged the Khalsa into the Guru, he merged the Guru also into the Khalsa : and he said this in his memorable words: "The Khalsa is the Guru and the Guru is the Khalsa."

**And the Guru Merged into the Khalsa**

Thus, in this manner, a powerful fraternity of 'soldier-saints' were created. They were to wear the sword. They were freed from all caste-restrictions. They were to follow their Guru rigidly and to sacrifice everything for him. They were not to fritter away their energies in mutual quarrels and in the worship of false deities. Day and night, they were to devote themselves to the worship of God and to carry out the commands of the Guru.

**Effects of the Creation of the Khalsa**

This creation of the Khalsa had a miraculous effect on the psychology and character of the Guru's disciples. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh have observed that even those people who had been considered dregs of humanity were changed, as if by magic, into something rich and strange. The sweepers, the barbers and confectioners, who had not even touched a sword and whose whole generations had lived as grovelling slaves of the so-called higher classes, became, under the stimulating leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, doughty warriors who never shrank from fear and who were ready to rush into the jaws of death at the bidding of their Guru.<sup>1</sup>

**Teja Singh's Views**

1. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : *A Short History of Sikhs*, p. 72

Cunningham says that Guru Gobind Singh, through this baptism of the sword, "roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty, although fitful, longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak. Gobind saw what was yet vital and he relumed it with Promethean fire."<sup>1</sup>

**Cunningham's  
Views**

Certain writers, however, have not fully understood the significance of this step of the Guru. For example, Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar says that by creating the Khalsa, the Guru "called in the human energy of the Sikhs from all other sides and made it flow in one particular channel only. They ceased to be full free men. He converted the spiritual unity of the Sikhs into a means of worldly success. He dwarfed the unity of a religious sect into an instrument of political advancement. Hence the Sikhs who had been advancing for centuries to be true men, suddenly stopped short and became mere soldiers."<sup>2</sup>

**J N. Sarkar's  
Views**

But this view of Sarkar does not hold ground today. Indubhushan Banerjee who has made a thorough and critical study of the life and teachings of Guru Gobind Singh has conclusively proved that the Guru did not aim at establishing a political power or at encouraging his followers to be more materialistic in their outlook or to forget the Lord in the worldly pursuits. The Guru, while giving the sword into the hands of his followers, admonished them "to consider their houses altogether as forests and remain anchorites at heart, to eat little, to sleep little and love mercy and forbearance, to practise humility and patience and not to attach themselves to lust, wrath, covetousness and worldly love, if they wanted to behold the Real Soul of this world and obtain the Supreme Being."<sup>3</sup> He even gave a clear warning to them that no amount of political or military power could save them if they lacked the fundamental requisites of divine knowledge and devotion.

**Banerjee's  
Views**

Thus, Guru Gobind Singh, despite all his military ardour, exalted above warfare the devoted worship of the True Name.

1. Garret : *Cunningham's History of the Sikhs*, p. 84
2. *Aurangzeb*, Vol. III, pp. 301-303
3. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Volume II, pp. 124-125

The Guru wanted his 'Singhs' or the Khalsa to lead a pious life and not to forget the Real Self in the worldly pursuits. They were instructed to rise at dawn, bathe and recite the hymns of the Gurus and try constantly to hold communion with the Lord. In addition, the Guru invested them with the sword to combat all sorts of tyranny and oppression. They were not given the sword to increase their own power or to tease and oppress others. Rather, the Guru increased the responsibility of his pious devotees to defend the weak and the down-trodden and to destroy the armies of the wicked and the tyrants. If he had given the sword in the hands of his disciples, it was because the Guru felt that, without it, the peaceful and pious devotees of Guru Nanak would not survive. In the *Zafar Nama*, which he wrote to Aurangzeb, he made it perfectly clear that he was forced to sanction the use of the sword :

“Chūnkār az hamān heelat-e darguzasht  
Halal ast burdan be shamsher dast”

*i.e.* when all other means have failed, it is lawful to wield the sword.

#### IV

##### The Post-Khalsa Period

This creation of the Khalsa in 1699 was not looked upon with favour by most of the hill chiefs. Firstly, his denunciation of the caste-system and image worship was a direct attack on their religious feelings. Secondly, they saw in the democratic teachings and the military zeal of the Guru a serious menace to their influence and independence. Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur (Bilaspur), in whose jurisdiction the headquarters of the Khalsa, *i.e.* Anandpur, were situated, felt much more concerned than any other hill chief. He wanted a pretext to turn the Guru out of his State ; and, therefore, wrote to the Guru that he should pay a huge sum of money as rent of Anandpur for the period he had occupied it. That demand was quite unreasonable and the Guru naturally turned it down. Consequently, Raja Bhim Chand, in alliance with other hill chiefs, invaded the Sikh territory and besieged Anandgarh. The Sikhs, though greatly outnumbered, fought with determined courage and succeeded in saving their fortress.

The First Battle  
of Anandpur  
(Anandgarh)  
1701

**BATTLES x OF**  
**GURU GOBIND SINGH**

INDUS R

JHELUM R

CHENAB R

RAVI R

BEAS R

SUTLEJ R

YAMUNA R

Anandpur

Chhamb

Jalandhar (Anandpur Sahib)



After that defeat, the hill chiefs appealed to Aurangzeb for assistance. The Emperor was away in the Deccan ; but he despatched orders to his Viceroys of Lahore and Sirhind to send military assistance to the Kahlur Chief to crush the power of the Guru. Even with the Mughal help, the Kahlur chief failed to dislodge the Guru from Anandpur. Rather, he made a truce with the Guru and hostilities were suspended for a few years and some days.

In 1705, hostilities again broke out. The Khalsa had greatly increased its power and even extended its territories at the expense of the hill chiefs. Again, the Hindu hill rajas sought the help of the Mughals. Consequently, Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sirhind, sent his forces to crush the power of the Guru. Anandpur was again besieged.

**The Second  
Battle of Anand-  
pur : 1705**

The Sikhs defended it heroically and the siege became protracted. At last, the Mughal generals cut off all the means of communication, and the defenders experienced great hardship in matters of food and water. But the Guru was determined to give a fight to the last and so a large number of Sikhs died of starvation. But, as there is a limit to human endurance and courage, the Sikhs appealed to the Guru that they should better surrender the fort. The latter, however, would not agree. Thereupon, forty of them signed a disclaimer and left the Guru. Despite those desertions, the Guru continued the struggle. It was, however, a hopeless task and, therefore, when he was left with only a few Sikhs, he sent a message to the Mughals that he would surrender the fort, provided his safe conduct was guaranteed. Those

**The Guru Left  
Anandpur in  
A.D. 1705**

terms were readily accepted and, thus, in 1705, the Guru left Anandpur.

Hardly had the Guru and his followers covered a few miles when they were overtaken by the Mughals. A great confusion followed and, consequently, while crossing the Sirsa, the Guru's mother and his two sons Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh were separated from the main party. The sons of the Guru were later on betrayed by one of their old Brahman servants, Gangu, who handed them over to the Kotwal of Morinda. They were then sent to Sirhind where Wazir Khan, the Governor, asked them to embrace Islam if they wanted their safety. On their refusal, they were bricked up alive in a wall at Sirhind. It was a great

tragedy. The children of five and eight years of age were put to death in the most brutal manner. It is said that their grandmother, Mata Gujar, died of that shock.

The Guru after crossing the Sirsa, marched towards Ropar and thence to Chamkaur. But he was hotly pursued and another hard-contested battle was fought at Chamkaur. It is said that in that battle, the Guru had only forty Sikhs but they fought with such courage and determination that they held the thousands of Mughals in check for a whole day. It was in that battle that the two elder sons of the Guru and his three Beloved Ones were killed. At last, out of forty, only five were left. The Guru was then requested by his Sikhs to leave the fort and, despite the heavy number of the besiegers, he succeeded in effecting his escape in disguise.

**The Battle of Chamkaur**

After his escape, he took refuge in the jungles of Machhiwara. But Wazir Khan, the inveterate enemy of the Guru, had issued orders to his generals that they should not take rest till the Guru was arrested. Consequently, parties of Mughal soldiers came to the jungles where the Guru was living in disguise. It is said that during that period, two Muslim friends of the Guru, Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan, not only gave him protection, but also saved him from arrest. When they learnt that the Mughal soldiers and spies were in search of the Guru, they escorted the Guru in a litter on their own shoulders and gave out that he was a Mohammedan *Faqir*, a saint from Uchh, i.e. 'Uchh ka Pir'.

**The Guru in the Jungles of Machhiwara**

The Guru next took shelter with Qazi Pir Mohammad of Saloh, from whom he had learnt Persian and studied the *Koran* in earlier days. Thence, he proceeded to Dina where he is said to have written the famous *Zafar Nama* or the Persian Epistle to Aurangzeb. In that epistle, he blamed Aurangzeb for his irreligious acts and justified his own conduct, particularly the use of the sword, against him. The Persian Epistle was sent to Aurangzeb through Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharm Singh. The Guru, however, could not remain at Dina for long and proceeded further till he reached Khidrana.

**'Zafar Nama' to Aurangzeb**

The last battle of the Guru with the Mughals was fought at

Khidrana, in the present-day Ferozepore District. There, the brunt of the attack was borne by those forty Sikhs who had signed a disclaimer at the second siege of Anandpur and had deserted the Guru. All the forty died fighting there and the Sikhs eventually succeeded in defeating the Mughals. The Guru was, however, very much impressed by the bravery and devotion of the forty Sikhs and forgave them for their previous fault. Rather, he blessed them and granted them salvation or 'Mukti' and, in their memory, Khidrana was named Muktsar.

**The Battle of  
Khidrana  
(Muktsar)  
1706**

Though the Guru had defeated the Mughals at Khidrana, yet he did not feel secure enough to settle there. He moved farther and at last settled at Talwandi Sabo to which the Sikhs gave the name of Damdama, as it gave breathing-space to the Guru. There, the Guru spent about a year and resumed the work of religious propaganda. He also called some learned Sikhs and gave final shape to his literary works. It was at Talwandi Sabo that the Guru brought the sacred *Granth* up to date by incorporating in it the hymns of his father and a single hymn of his own. Thus, the *Adi Granth* was finally edited there. It was because of these literary activities that Talwandi Sabo or 'Damdama' has earned the title of 'Guru's Kashi' or Guru's Banaras.

**The Guru Settled  
at Talwandi Sabo  
(Damdama)**

In 1707, Aurangzeb died and was succeeded by Bahadur Shah. The new Emperor was friendly to the Guru and it is said that the latter had even given active military assistance to Bahadur Shah at the battle of Jajjou which was fought between Bahadur Shah and his brothers. In 1708, when Bahadur Shah marched to the South, he took the Guru along with him. On his way to the Deccan, the Guru was stabbed by a Pathan at Nander, where he died in October 1708.

## V

### Death of Guru Gobind Singh

Historians have given different versions regarding the death of Guru Gobind Singh. Malcolm and the author of *Syār-ul-Mutakhrin* say that the Guru died of grief on account of the loss of his sons. But this is absolutely incorrect, because according to the Sikh tradition, the Guru was a perfect religious teacher and regarded the execution and death of his sons as ordained by

the Divine Will. He bore the tragic news of the death of his sons not only patiently but also cheerfully and with perfect composure. Some of the Sikh writers, such as Bhai Santokh Singh, tell us that the Guru himself excited one Pathan, Gul Khan, to avenge the death of his grandfather, Painsa Khan, who had been killed some time back by Guru Hargobind. This version also does not seem to be true. The Guru could not have possibly brought about his own death. These Sikh historians might have given this story in order to prove that the Guru knew about his death beforehand. Sainapat, the court historian of Guru Gobind Singh and author of *Gur Sobha*, has given the following version about the death of the Guru and there seems to be no reason to disbelieve it.

“When the Guru was stationed at Nander, one Pathan came near the Guru and talked to him sweetly for two or three ‘gharis’ to get his chance. But he could not get it because of the presence of numerous persons. He went to his house and again came... and again went away without getting the chance. Similarly, he came for so many times, but without success... But one evening he called upon the Guru... There was no Sikh near by at that time except one who was dozing and the Guru himself was lying down for rest. The assassin attacked the Guru with a dagger. The Guru flourished his sword and with one stroke killed him and did not allow him to go out.” But the wound inflicted by that unknown Pathan proved to be fatal and the Guru died on October, 1708, after having functioned as Guru for nearly 33 years.

The recent researches, however, tell us that the Pathan who stabbed the Guru was most probably commissioned by Wazir Khan, the *Faujdar* of Sirhind, who saw his own ruin in the cordial relationship which the Guru had developed with the new Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah, the successor of Aurangzeb.<sup>1</sup>

The Guru, however, before his death, gave the following instructions to his disciples :

“I have entrusted you to the Immortal God. Ever remain under His protection and trust none besides. Wherever there are five Sikhs assembled, know that I am in the midst of them.

1. For details, please refer to the Article by Professor Kirpal Singh, Research Scholar, Khalsa College, Amritsar, on “Martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh Ji.”



Henceforth the Guru shall be in the Khalsa and the Khalsa in the Guru. I have infused my mental and bodily spirit into the *Granth Sahib* and the Khalsa.”<sup>1</sup>

## IV

### Estimate of Guru Gobind Singh's Character And Achievements

Guru Gobind Singh occupies a very high place in the history of the Punjab. His inspiring message and noble example set the souls of the Punjabis free and filled their hearts with a lofty longing for freedom and national ascendancy ; and they did not take rest till they had completely shattered the shackles of slavery—social and political. By waging war with a few thousand and sometimes even with less than a hundred soldiers against the mighty Mughal Empire of India, Guru Gobind Singh broke the charm attached to the Lord of Delhi (Dillishwar) and destroyed the awe and terror inspired by his name.

**Guru Gobind  
Singh Inspired  
the Punjabis**

When Guru Gobind took charge of his disciples, Hinduism was facing a great crisis. Aurangzeb, with all his might, was determined to convert *Dar-ul-Harb* (the Land of the Infidels) into *Dar-ul-Islam* (the Land of the Faithful). The Guru, by arming his disciples and arousing them to resist the Mughals, set such an example for the other Hindus that even the fear of Aurangzeb and the temptations of his offices failed to attract them to his faith. Bullah Shah has rightly said in his couplet that if Guru Gobind Singh had not taken birth, most of the Hindus (particularly those of northern India) might have embraced Islam. Thus, Guru Gobind Singh ranks with the great saviours of Hinduism.

**Saviour of  
Hinduism**

It is true that he was a saviour of Hinduism, but this does not imply that he was a sworn enemy of Islam. If he rose against the hill chiefs or the Mughal Governors or armed his followers against them, his main aim was that his countrymen should not submit to tyranny and injustice. He was essentially a religious man and his creed was the creed of love. Had he been an enemy of Islam, persons, such

**But not a Sworn  
Enemy of Islam**

1. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Vol. V, p. 244

as Nabi Khan, Ghani Khan and Buddhu Shah would never have given him help or protection during the most critical phases of his career.

**Not a Military or Political Leader—Essentially a Man of God**      Guru Gobind Singh was neither merely a military leader, nor a political leader, but fundamentally a man of God. If he wielded the sword himself, and asked his followers to use it, his underlying motive was essentially religious. He would not like that the votaries of Nanak should see tyranny and suffering all around and keep sitting and watching all that happened with rosaries in their hands. He had a firm conviction that cowardice was the greatest vice in religion and he, therefore, wanted his Sikhs to be fearless and fight the tyrants with determination and courage. But they were repeatedly warned by the Guru that they were not to misuse the sword by striking fear in the hearts of others. He also admonished his followers that their goal was the love of God and the glorification of His Name and that they should, with all their might and energy, strive to attain that goal. In his *Bachittar Natak*, Guru Gobind Singh clearly states that he had come on a divine mission to save his people from the wicked and the tyrants.

**A Scholar and a Poet—Patron of Learning**      The Guru, besides being a great religious leader, was also a man of great learning. He was fond of the company of the learned. He composed a large number of verses in Persian, Hindi and Punjabi, which are found scattered in his writings, such as *Jap Sahib*, *Zafar Nama* and *Bachittar Natak*. Some of his *Slokas*, *Sawayas* and *Chaupais* in Hindi, according to some of the well-known Hindi critics, 'deserve the very highest place in the ranks of Hindi poetry of the narrative and epic kind.' His love for learning is further borne out by the fact that while he was at Paonta, fifty-two poets of great fame attended his durbar and similarly, when after his long wars he settled at Talwandi Sabo, a large number of scholars again flocked to him to receive inspiration from him. In a short time, Talwandi Sabo came to be known as Guru's 'Kashi' or Guru's Banaras. His chief aim in undertaking that literary programme was to make his Sikhs acquainted with ancient lore and through it foster the spirit of self-confidence and self-reliance in them.

Two well-known poets who were great devotees of the Guru

were Saina Pat and Bhai Nand Lal. Saina Pat's greatest work is *Gursobha* wherein he has given a graphic description of the main events of the Guru's career. Bhai Nand Lal was a Persian and Arabic scholar and composed Persian poetry under the pen-name of 'Goya'. Some of his well-known works which he wrote during Guru Gobind Singh's period are *Zindgi-Nama* and *Diwan-i-Goya*.

**Saina Pat and  
Bhai Nand Lal**

Guru Gobind Singh was also a staunch believer in democracy. It was a revolutionary and an extremely democratic step when, after initiating his Five Beloved Ones into the Khalsa Panth, he stood up and asked them to initiate him also thereinto. His memorable words on that occasion, i.e. 'the Guru, is the Khalsa and the Khalsa is the Guru and that 'wherever there are five Sikhs assembled, know that I am there' prove beyond doubt how greatly the Guru wanted his people to lead a corporate life. His abolition of the personal Guru and his asking the Sikhs to hold general councils and decide things by mutual deliberations testify to the fact that like Rousseau, he advocated the sovereignty of the general will of the people.

**A Staunch  
Believer in  
Democracy**

From the above discussion, we are at one with Indubhushan Banerjee when he remarks that Guru Gobind Singh was 'a builder par excellence'. "He brought a new people into being and released a new dynamic force into the arena of Indian history."<sup>1</sup> The teachings of the Guru and the creation of the Khalsa had a miraculous effect in uplifting the depressed and the down-trodden. His touch transformed the dregs of humanity into doughty warriors and those who were hitherto regarded as unclean and polluted in the Hindu society became leaders among men of high birth and determined the destiny of thousands.

**A Builder par  
Excellence**

The great Guru was a rare combination of multiple qualities. He was a true *yogi*, a practical leader of men, a mystic, a saint, a military general and a poet. His life and teachings shed lustre on Indian history. His glorious example infuses new spirit in us, for he said, "I will make sparrows tear hawks; then alone may I be called Gobind Singh." He practised secularism, nursed demo-

1. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Vol. 2, page 159

cratic institutions and stood for peace with honour. Born at Patna, the Guru chose the Punjab and Himachal Pradesh as his field of activity. He gave up his mortal frame in the Deccan. Both in life and death, he exemplified national integration and all those creeds which modern India is endeavouring to uphold. He was a forerunner of Gandhi and Nehru and his teachings have, thus, an all-time validity and value for us.

### **Books for Further Study**

1. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa*, Volume II
2. Kartar Singh : *Guru Gobind Singh*
3. Sukha Singh : *Gur-Bilas*
4. Saina Pat : *Gur-Sobha*
5. Gyan Singh : *Panth Prakash*
6. Sarkar, J.N. : *Aurangzeb*
7. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Volume V
8. G.C. Narang : *Transformation of Sikhism*
6. Ibbetson : *A Glossary of Tribes and Castes of Punjab and North-West Frontier*
10. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : *A short History of Sikhs*
11. Payne : *A short History of Sikhs*
12. Khazan Singh : *History and Philosophy of Sikh Religion*, Volume I



## CHAPTER X

### **Political History of the Punjab in the Mughal Times and the Relations of the Mughal Emperors with the Sikh Gurus**

#### **I**

#### **Political History**

**Mughal Empe-  
rors Had a Firm  
Hold over the  
Punjab**

The knowledge of the past, and particularly that of the past of one's own motherland, is very essential. The noble deeds of one's great ancestors become a source of great inspiration while tackling the problems of the day. It is, therefore, natural that the people inhabiting the Punjab should have a desire to know how their ancestors thought, acted and lived in olden times. In the Mughal days, the Punjab formed one of the important provinces of the Mughal State which was divided by Akbar into 12 *Subahs*. It was one of the most consolidated parts of the Empire. The Mughal Emperors were very particular in having a firm hold over it. There were several reasons for this. In the first instance, they regarded it as a great reservoir of their military resources and, therefore, naturally they wanted to keep it in a condition by which they could easily tap its resources in times of need. Secondly, the Mughals had come from the trans-Indus land. They had vital interest in the countries lying in the north-west of the Punjab and had often to undertake expeditions to conquer or restore order there. Thirdly, since the conquest of Kashmir in 1589, the Punjab had acquired a special importance in the eyes of the Mughals. Both Akbar and Jahangir had developed a special fondness for the scenery and climate of this "Bridal Chamber of the Spring" and would often visit it for relaxation and health reasons. As the *Subah* of Lahore lay on the route to Kashmir, Punjab began to be visited by the Mughal Emperors much more frequently than before. And naturally, every visit of the Emperor implied greater attention to the development and welfare of the Punjab which lay on the way to Kashmir. It is, thus, on account of these reasons that the Punjab received more thorough care regarding its administration and development than any other province of the Mughal State.

In the days of Babar, the only part which can be said to have been fully consolidated was the Punjab. After his death, his son Humayun gave the Punjab to his brother Kamran, and this was his fundamental mistake. By giving this important part of his Empire to his brother, whose fidelity to the Mughal throne had not yet been proved to be beyond suspicion, he deprived himself of the great recruiting ground through which he could have easily raised a powerful army to defeat Sher Shah at the time when he (Humayun) was driven out of Agra and Delhi. Sher Shah, however, was a shrewd and wise ruler, and, after his victories of Chausa and Kanauj, he did not take rest till he had driven the Mughals completely out of the Punjab. In order to consolidate his position fully, he built the famous Fort of Rohtas near the Jhelum. The construction of this great fort was supervised by Raja Todar Mal, a well-known figure of the Mughal history. Sher Shah's successor, Islam Shah, pursued the same policy towards the Punjab ; but after Islam Shah's death, anarchy set in again in the Punjab. Consequently, Humayun again appeared in the Punjab and defeated Sikandar Sur at the battle of Sirhind. Punjab was, thus, reconquered. But Sikandar Sur had escaped to the Siwalik hills from where he hoped to carry on the struggle against the Mughals. A few months after, Humayun died and Akbar was proclaimed as his successor in a Punjab town, namely, Kalanaur.

**The Punjab  
under Babar,  
Humayun and  
the Suri Emperor**

Thus, Punjab, at the accession of Akbar, was not yet fully consolidated. Sikandar Sur was making huge preparations in his hilly retreat to make another bold bid for the recovery of the Punjab. So, the first task before Akbar and his regent Bairam was to wage war against Sikandar. Accordingly, a big expedition under Khwaja Khizar was sent against him and in May 1557, the imperialists won a decisive victory at Mankot. But that victory did not end the anxiety of Akbar, as a few years later, Bairam Khan, in alliance with the Punjab Governor Hussain Khan, raised the standard of revolt. Akbar sent Shams-ud-din against them and Bairam Khan was eventually defeated at Guna-Chaur. Then the victor Shams-ud-din acted as the Governor of the Punjab for some time. In November 1561, the Governorship of the Punjab was given to Mir Muhammad Khan Kalan whose regime is significant

**Punjab under  
Akbar: 1556-1568**

for two reasons. Firstly, he subdued the Gakhars by giving a crushing defeat to their leader Adham Khan. Secondly, he successfully suppressed the rebellion of the Mirzas who were led by Akbar's brother Hakim Mirza.

In 1558, Khan Kalan was transferred somewhere else and Husain Quli Khan was appointed in his place. For the next seven years, Hussain Quli held the charge of the Punjab. He extended the boundaries of his province by conquering Nagarkot. He also defeated the Mirzas who had again made an attempt to wrest the Punjab from Akbar. It was during the period of Hussain Quli's governorship that Akbar personally visited the Punjab and paid his respects to the Sikh Guru Amar Das. He also went to Pakpattan and made rich offerings at the famous shrine of Baba Farid. In 1575, Hussain Quli was replaced by Shah Quli Khan Mahram. He held that office for three years, from 1575 to 1578, but his governorship was marked by corruption and inefficiency. Consequently, Akbar recalled him and appointed Said Khan in his place. It was during Said Khan's regime that the orthodox Muslim nobles, tired of Akbar's liberal policy towards the Hindus, conspired with Akbar's half-brother Mirza Hakim to overthrow Akbar. It is alleged that the Chief Dewan, Khwaza Shah Mansur, was also a party to that conspiracy. It was a great crisis for Akbar and he, therefore, moved to the Punjab to reinforce Said Khan and also to direct the military operations against the rebels personally. In the end, Mirza and his supporters were defeated.

In 1585, the warlike tribes inhabiting the hilly territory in the north-west raised the standard of revolt. Akbar then shifted his imperial headquarters to the Punjab and from 1585 to 1598 remained mostly at Lahore. It was during that period that he waged a ruthless war against the Afghan tribes; and at the cost of very heavy losses succeeded in restoring order in the north-west frontier. Raja Bir Bal was killed in one of those wars. During his stay at Lahore during that period, he also conquered Kashmir; and it was also at Lahore that Akbar received the first mission of the Jesuit Fathers and, later on, permitted them to open a mission school for the instruction of the sons of the Mughal nobles.

**Punjab  
(1568-1685) :  
Hussain Quli,  
and Shah Quli  
Mahram Khan**

**Lahore as Impe-  
rial Headquarters  
from 1585 to 1598.  
Akbar's Reforms  
in the Punjab**

During that period, he also carried out a number of social reforms in the Punjab. He issued an ordinance by which the practice of forcible 'Sati' was abolished. He also issued an edict exhorting his Hindu subjects to allow widow re-marriage. Akbar, however, was a strict believer in *pardah* and used to say that women who were found moving without *pardah* in the streets and bazaars should better practise prostitution. It was also during his stay at Lahore that the Punjab witnessed one of its severest famines. Akbar, in line with his general fiscal policy, opened free kitchens, remitted the land revenue of the affected areas and even advanced money to the victims. He also carried out a number of judicial reforms in the Punjab, the most important among those being the one by which he permitted the Brahmans to try the cases of the Hindus. He also permitted the Hindus of the Punjab to build their temples freely. It was also during that period that Akbar visited Guru Arjan and was deeply impressed by the saintly figure of the Sikh Guru. In 1598, Akbar left Lahore, but before leaving it, he appointed Khwaja Shams-ud-din to look after the affairs of the Punjab and the latter held that office till 1600. He was succeeded by Zain Khan Koka (1600—1601) and Mirza Qulij Khan (1601-1605).

Akbar's death was followed by a war of succession. Jahangir's succession was disputed by his own son Khusrow. The latter came to the Punjab and raised the standard of revolt. Some of the nobles joined him. It is said that Guru Arjan too blessed him. Jahangir personally hastened to the Punjab, defeated his rebellious son and gave drastic punishment to all those who had supported him. The Emperor was already viewing with disfavour the growing popularity of the Sikh Guru whom he arrested and got executed without even giving him a chance to defend himself.

From 1605 to 1610, the Punjab was first held by Said Khan and then by Dilawar Khan. In 1610, Murtaza Khan who had greatly helped Jahangir in suppressing Khusrow's revolt, was appointed the Punjab Governor and he held that office till 1616. The next *Subadar* was Sadiq Khan (1616-1624). In 1624, Itmad-ud-Daula was given the governorship of the Punjab. It was he who invited Jahangir and gave him the feast of Nauroz which cost him four

**Punjab under  
Jahangir : 1606  
1627**

**(i) Execution  
of Guru Arjan**

**(ii) Itmad-ud-  
Daula's Reforms**



lakhs and fifty thousand *Dams*. It was also in the period of Itmad-ud-Daula that the construction of a road from Lahore to Agra was undertaken and Jahangir ordered that pillars should be built at distances of every *kos* and a well be dug at every three *kos*. Trees were also to be planted on both sides of the road. The construction of royal buildings was also undertaken by Itmad-ud-Daula. Mansur Khan was one of the most famous architects employed by Itmad in the construction of those buildings. Besides, from 1619 onwards, Jahangir visited Punjab almost every year because it lay on the route to Kashmir, and Jahangir, on account of health reasons, spent every summer in Kashmir. In 1627, Jahangir died at Changiz Hatti in the Punjab and was buried at Shahdara on the bank of the River Ravi.

Guru Hargobind and Jahangir had grown very friendly and, according to the Sikh tradition, the Guru often accompanied Jahangir on his hunting expeditions. The Sikh chroniclers also say that Jahangir even visited Ramdaspur or Amritsar and offered to meet the expenses of the whole of Akal Bunga, but the Guru had declined saying that he wanted the service and co-operation of his followers and not any imperial favour.

Shah Jahan was not so fond of the Punjab and Kashmir as his father, Jahangir, was. But he, too, paid a number of visits to the Punjab. In 1633, he visited Lahore and again in 1638, while on his way to Kabul, he spent some time in the Punjab. The *subadars* who ruled the Punjab during Shah Jahan's period were Wazir Khan (1628 – 1637), Alimardan Khan (1637—1644), Qulich Khan (1644—1647) and Jafar Khan (1647—1659). The period of Ali Mardan is significant for a canal from the Ravi at the point it enters the plains. It was dug with a view to irrigating the suburbs of Lahore. It was also at the residence of Ali Mardan that Shah Jahan celebrated the Nauroz of 1641. During his governorship, there occurred a serious famine in 1642. Contemporaneous European writers tell us that Shah Jahan and Ali Mardan administered famine relief on a very large scale. Besides opening free kitchens and remitting land revenue, they distributed food worth Rs. 200 a day among the famine sufferers. After Ali Mardan, the Punjab was for some time held by Shah Jahan's favourite son Dara Shikoh. That is why in the war of succession, when Dara Shikoh was defeated at Samugarh, he fled to the

Punjab under  
Shah Jahan, Ali  
Mardan and  
Dara

Punjab fully confident that the Punjab nobles would give him full support. Some of the nobles did render Dara great help. It is said that even Guru Har Rai lent him his support. But Aurangzeb, by quick action, foiled all the attempts of Dara and eventually Malik Jiwan of Dadar betrayed him and handed him over to Aurangzeb. The latter brought him (Dara) to Delhi, where he was most mercilessly put to death.

Aurangzeb, like Shah Jahan, paid very little attention to the affairs of the Punjab, and, therefore, very little is known of the political history of the Punjab of his times. The *subadars* who governed the Punjab during that period were Khalil-ulla-Khan (1659—1661), Ibrahim Khan (1661—1667, Mohammad Amin Khan (1667—1672), Amanat Khan (1672—1678), Qawam-ud-din Khan (1678—1680), Mohammad Azim (1680—1691), Muqarram Khan (1691—1697), Abraham Khan (1697—1700), and Mohammad Muazzam Khan (1700—1707). One of the notable works of Aurangzeb in the Punjab is the great dam which he built to protect Lahore from the floods of the Ravi. The dam was four miles long and was constructed at a very heavy cost.

Most of Aurangzeb's time was spent in waging wars against the Rajputs and the Marathas in the South. He could not attend to the Punjab affairs with the seriousness which its strategic importance demanded. Consequently, there occurred serious uprisings of the frontier tribes and of the Sikhs. Of course, those insurrections were suppressed, but still the hold of the Mughal Emperor over the Punjab was shaken and that factor became one of the basic reasons for the later disintegration of the Mughal Empire.

## II

### Relations of the Sikh Gurus with the Mughal Emperors

From the study of the Sikh tradition and some scattered references in the Persian chronicles of the Mughals, we can form a clear idea of the relations of the Sikh Gurus with the Mughal Emperors. In fact, a detailed study of their relations has already been made in the history of the Sikh Gurus.

Babar's entry into India was not hailed by Guru Nanak. He, in his hymns, rather painted a very pathetic picture of Babar's atrocities in the Punjab, in general, and at Sayyidpur (Eminabad), in particular. He also condemned the Lodhi Sultan for not offering a strong and united resistance to Babar and in one of his hymns he says : "No one will remember the names of Lodhi dogs." According to the Sikh tradition, Guru Nanak was arrested at Sayyidpur, but when Babar was informed of the Guru's saintly character, he saw him personally, begged him to forgive him and even sought his blessings. It is said that Guru Nanak forgave Babar and blessed him and his dynasty.

**Guru Nanak  
and Babar**

Humayaun, too, is said to have visited Goindwal after his defeat at the hands of Sher Shah with a view to seeking the blessings of Guru Angad, the then pontiff of the Sikhs. But as the Guru was in a trance, Humayun was kept waiting for some time. The Mughal Emperor, thereupon, lost his temper and even tried to unsheathe his sword to attack the Guru. The latter then smiled and remarked, "You had better used your sword against Sher Shah." Humayun realized his mistake and expressed regret. He then sought the blessings of the Guru for the recovery of his throne. The blessings were given, but the Guru told him that since he had not the patience to wait for some time at his door, he would have now to wait for some time to recover his kingdom.

**Guru Angad  
and Humayun**

Akbar was fond of the company of the religious leaders of different sects and whenever any opportunity for associating with holy persons occurred, he always availed himself of it. Sometime in 1568 or 1569, Akbar visited the Punjab and, on his way to Lahore, he went to see Guru Amar Das. The Sikh tradition tells us that Akbar was very much impressed by the saintliness of the Guru and he requested the latter to accept a royal favour. But the Guru told him plainly that he needed nothing. Akbar, however, made a grant of several villages in the name of the Guru's daughter Bibi Bhani.

**Akbar and His  
Relations with  
Guru Amar Das  
and Guru Ram  
Das**

A little later, some orthodox Hindu Khatries and Brahmans, living in the neighbourhood of Goindwal, made a representation to Akbar that the teachings and activities of Guru Amar Das were not in conformity with the Hindu religion and, therefore, an action should be taken

**Guru Ram Das  
and Akbar**

against him. The Emperor, consequently, summoned the Guru to the Court but the latter declined the summons on the score of his advanced age and sent Bhai Jetha (Ram Das) on his behalf to explain away the charges levelled against him. Akbar found the charges of the Brahmans absolutely frivolous and gave his decision in favour of the Guru. But the Emperor in a friendly way asked Bhai Jetha to request the Guru to make a pilgrimage to the Ganges in order to divert the wrath of the Hindus. He, on his part, promised not to charge any pilgrim tax from the Guru's party<sup>1</sup>. There seems to be little truth in this story. The pilgrim tax had been remitted by Akbar much earlier. Besides, the advice of Akbar to the Guru to visit the Ganges in order to avoid the wrath of the orthodox Hindus looks strange. It is difficult to accept the Sikh Guru to do anything to appease the orthodox section of the community, particularly when that section was wrong and had levelled frivolous charges against him. This thing is, however, certain that Guru Amar Das made a pilgrimage to the Ganges. "But the motive for this, as suggested in the narrative described above," says Indubhushan Banerjee, "may be unacceptable."

In the early years of the pontificate of Guru Arjan, some of the Mughal officials in the Punjab, such as Sulhi Khan, took up the cause of the pretender, Prithia, and tried to create troubles for the Guru. Prithia had even tried to poison the ears of the Emperor against the Guru, but all his attempts had failed. Akbar, throughout his reign, remained friendly to the Sikh Gurus and the Persian historian of his reign, Badaoni, tells us that the Emperor visited Goindwal to see Guru Arjan whose teachings and character he appreciated. Munshi Sujan Rai, the author of *Khulasat-ut-Twarikh*, describes that visit of Akbar in the following words :

"He (Akbar) crossed the Beas and visited the house of Guru Arjan, a disciple and successor of Baba Nanak, and he was very much pleased when he recited some of the poems of Baba Nanak about the unity of Godhead. The Guru expressed his obligation to the Emperor for his visit and at the time of his departure represented to him that in the Punjab the price of corn had gone up and the people found it difficult to pay the revenue. The Emperor accepted his request and issued orders to his officers to reduce the

1. Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Volume II, page 108



revenue by one-tenth or one-twelfth".<sup>1</sup>

With the death of Akbar begins the period of estrangement in the relations of the Sikh Gurus and the Mughal Emperors.

**Guru Arjan and Jahangir** Immediately after the death of Akbar, Prince Khusrow raised the standard of revolt against his father, Jahangir. The Prince, during his flight, sought the blessings of the Sikh Guru, which, as is usual with saintly persons, were readily given. Jahangir in his own memoirs says that he was already thinking of taking some steps against the Guru on account of the popularity of the new creed ; and so, making Khusrow's visits to the Guru as a pretext, he arrested the Guru and got him executed even without a trial. (For details, see the Chapter on Guru Arjan.)

Guru Arjan's execution (or martyrdom, as the Sikhs call it) proved a turning-point in the Sikh history. His successor, Guru

**Guru Hargobind and Jahangir** Hargobind, asked his followers to bear arms and fight against the Mughal tyranny. Jahangir could not permit such things, and consequently, arrested Guru Hargobind. He was imprisoned in the Fort of Gwalior ; but after a few years, mainly through the intercession of a Muslim saint, Hazrat Mian Mir, he was released.

During Shah Jahan's reign, the relations of the Sikh Gurus and the Mughal Emperor again deteriorated. The quarrels, which

**Guru Hargobind and Shah Jahan** originally broke out over hawks or horses between the Mughal officials and the Sikhs, led to some serious fights causing the deaths of thousands of persons on both sides. The details of the battles of Amritsar, Lahira and Kartarpur which were fought between Guru Hargobind and the Mughals have been given in a separate chapter on Guru Hargobind. But those wars against the Mughals made the Sikh Guru retire to Kiratpur in the hills where he spent the rest of his life.

In 1645, Guru Har Rai succeeded Gnru Hargobind. He followed a policy of preaching the Sikh faith peacefully and hence, for

**Guru Har Rai and Shah Jahan** some time his relations with the Mughal Empire remained cordial. It is said that Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Emperor Shah Jahan, had developed

1. See Munshi Sujan Singh Rai's *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*, as quoted by M. Akbar in the *History of the Punjab*.

such a great regard for the Guru that when the Prince fell ill, the Guru sent him a medicine by which he was speedily cured. A little later, Dara was involved in the war of succession against his brothers and was defeated at Samuhgarh. He, thereupon, came to the Punjab to raise an army to make another bid to recover his lost dominions. In the course of that visit, he came to the Guru also, and asked him for military aid and his blessings. It is said that the Guru gave him some help. But that assistance did not prove useful to Dara, as most of his Muslim nobles deserted him. After Dara's defeat, Aurangzeb naturally became a bitter enemy of the Sikh Guru because of the latter's help to his rival.

After seating himself firmly on the throne, Aurangzeb called the Guru to his Court. But the Guru sent his eldest son, Ram Rai, to represent him at the Imperial Court. Aurangzeb told Ram Rai that the Sikh scriptures contained a number of hymns against Islam and he even read out one verse from the *Adi Granth* in support of his charge. Ram Rai, however, did not show moral courage to explain the meaning boldly. Rather he distorted the text. By that distortion, he certainly averted the wrath of the Emperor, but incurred that of his father who disinherited him and appointed his younger son Har Krishan, a child of six, as his successor.

The disinheritance made Ram Rai furious and he conspired with Aurangzeb to set aside the claims of his brother Har Krishan.

Accordingly, Guru Har Krishna was called to Delhi, but before he could go to see the Emperor, he got an attack of smallpox and, consequently, died in 1664. Gur Har Krishan's successor, Tegh Bahadur, inherited the hostility of the Mughal Emperor; but for some time, mainly through the intercession of Mirza Raja Ram Singh, Aurangzeb did not take any serious action against the Guru. Rather, the Rajput chief took him along with him on his Assam expedition. After the conquest of Assam, Guru Tegh Bahadur returned to the Punjab and settled at Makhawal (Anandpur).

But the policy of religious persecution of Aurangzeb had created such a stir in the Punjab that a large number of the people approached the Guru for guidance; and, as stated elsewhere, the Guru decided to sacrifice his life. Accordingly, he was brought to

Delhi and executed in 1674.

After his death, his son and successor, Guru Gobind Singh, waged a ruthless war against the Mughal tyranny, the details of which are given in the chapter on Guru Gobind Singh.

Guru  
Singh

Gobind

Singh.

### III

#### Raja Todar Mal and Saadullah Khan

The Mughal Punjab is proud of having produced two great figures that occupied the highest positions in the Mughal State. They made the biggest contribution to the organization and administration of the Mughal Empire. They are Raja Todar Mal and Saadullah Khan.

Raja Todar Mal was a Tandan Khatri. His native place was Chunian, a small town near Lahore. It is said that, while still a child, he lost his father. His mother got him educated with very great difficulty. He first joined Sher Shah's service and it is said that he worked as a supervisor of the Rohtas Fort for some time. Some writers, however, say that Sher Shah had employed Todar Mal while elaborating his revenue policy. He joined Akbar's service in 1573 and was first employed in Gujarat to make assessment of that newly conquered province. Next year, he was sent in company with Munim Khan to Bengal. Abul Fazal, the court historian of Akbar, says that Todar Mal was in fact 'the soul' of the Bengal expedition. He greatly distinguished himself in the final defeat and capture of Daud. Later on, when rebellion occurred again in Bengal, Todar Mal was sent there again and he, by his intrepidity and courage, reduced the rebels to submission once more.

In 1583, Todar Mal was made the Dewan or Vakil. He was given the title of 'Raja' and his '*mansab*' or rank was raised to Charhazari (the Commander of four thousand troops). From 1583 to 1589, he was really the chief administrator. He reformed the currency and re-organized the whole revenue machinery. One of his chief reforms was that the revenue accounts which were hitherto maintained both in Hindi and Persian, were thereafter ordered to be kept in Persian only.] By that policy, his Hindu brethren got an impetus to read the Persian language. Till that time, the Hindus, as a rule, did not study Persian and,

Todar Mal's  
Chief Reform—  
All Revenue  
Accounts to be  
Kept in Persian

hence, they stood politically below their Muslim rulers. Henceforward, his co-religionists were encouraged to read Persian and, thus, acquired an effective share in Government services.

Besides, he introduced several regulations by which he tried to improve the condition of the agriculturists. He fixed the procedure for revenue collection and even made a provision to impose fines for excess realization. He also encouraged the system of advancing cash-loans for improving the land. He made it obligatory on the collectors to submit annual reports to the Chief Dewan regarding the condition of land in their areas. Akbar was so much pleased with the work of the Raja that he honoured him by paying a visit to him at his residence at Lahore.

#### **Todar Mal's Land Revenue Reforms**

Besides serving the Mughal State in that way, he also fought bravely for its defence. It has already been mentioned how he had distinguished himself in the Bengal campaigns. He was also sent to fight against the turbulent Afghan tribes in the north-west and there, too, he won great military laurels. Thus, Todar Mal, besides being an able financier, proved himself to be a great general.

#### **Todar Mal, also a Great General**

In the beginning of 1589, he resigned and retired to the Ganges to spend the rest of his life in solitude and prayers. But Akbar found it difficult to fill up the gap caused by the retirement of the Raja and, consequently, recalled him. But Todar Mal was not destined to live long and soon after his return fell ill and died on November 10, 1589.

#### **Retirement and Death of Todar Mal in 1589**

Raja Todar Mal was an orthodox Hindu and it is said that Abul Fazal hated him for that weakness. It was a habit with him not to eat and drink till he had worshipped his idols. Once, while accompanying Akbar to the Punjab, his idols were lost. He was so much disconcerted that for several days he remained without food and drink. It was with great difficulty that he was cheered up. The contemporaneous Persian historians also tell us that he was very vain and would often quarrel with his colleagues even on petty matters. But despite all shortcomings, Todar Mal's fame and his revenue reforms have outlived the deeds of most of Akbar's grandees.

#### **Character of Todar Mal**



The other great Punjabi of the Mughal times is Saadullah Khan. Like Todar Mal, he also rose to the highest position in the State due to his personal merits, efficiency and loyalty. In 1640, Saadullah was appointed one of the personal staff of Shah Jahan. He was appointed on a cash salary and was not even given any *mansab*. But within one year, he impressed Shah Jahan so much that the latter gave him the rank of 'Mansabdar of One Thousand' and in 1642 appointed him 'Darogha Ghusalkhana' (Superintendent of the Private Chamber). In 1645, Saadullah was appointed the Chief Dewan and he held that exalted office for more than a decade.

Ibn Hasan says, "Saadullah Khan was decidedly the most learned, the most efficient and the best Dewan of Shah Jahan. He combined in his person the highest literary accomplishments of his age with an extraordinary capacity for the management of officers placed under his charge." He was as capable as Abul Fazal. But, unlike the latter, he was not a flatterer. He had the courage of his convictions and would not say or do anything simply to please his master. His motto was "loyalty to the salt is an approved principle, but in matters of the master, which concern the poor, loyalty consists in having regard for the latter." During his period of *vazarat*, Hindustan grew prosperous. He was stern to the corrupt and kind to the poor. Like Todar Mal, he also served the Emperor on the battlefield and greatly distinguished himself in the Balkh and Qandhar expeditions. In his death, which occurred in 1655, Shah Jahan lost one of his ablest and most loyal *vazirs*. "Saadullah Khan", says Ibn Hassan, "was not only the best Dewan of Shah Jahan but can also be regarded as the best of the long line of the Mughal *vazirs*." The Punjab is proud to have produced a man of the calibre of Saadullah Khan.

#### **Books for Further Study**

Latif : *History of the Punjab*

S. R. Sharma : *Mughal Empire*

B. S. Nijjar : *Punjab under the Great Mughals*

Beni Parshad : *Jahangir*

M. Akbar : *The Panjab under the Mughals*

Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of the Khalsa*

Vols. I & II

**Ibn Hussan : *Central Structure of the Mughal Empire***

**Cunningham : *A History of the Sikhs***

**Blochman : *Ain-i-Akbari***

## CHAPTER XI

### ADMINISTRATION

Babar, the founder of the Mughal Dynasty, had hardly any time to devote to the administrative reorganization of the Punjab, nor could anything in this respect be done by his son and immediate successor, Hamayun. Under both of them, the old arrangement, whether good or bad, continued. It was indeed the creative genius of Akbar that overhauled the entire administrative machinery. It goes to his credit that the reforms introduced by him continued through the reigns of all his successors.

The administration in the Punjab was a replica of the central government, as organized by Akbar. The whole Mughal Empire was divided into provinces, districts and *parganas*.

#### Subdivisions

The provinces were called *Subas*, the districts were called *Sarkars* and the *parganas* were designated as *mahals*. In areas where the means of communication were difficult, the *parganas* or *mahals* were further divided into units known as *tappas*.

In the beginning, the *Suba* of the Punjab extended lengthwise from the Satluj to the Indus, a distance of 180-200 *kos*; and breadthwise from Bhimbar to Chaukhandi, a distance of 80 *kos*. After Akbar, it was split up into two provinces, namely, Lahore and Multan.

#### Physical Boundaries

Thus, in the north-west of the Mughal Empire, there were four provinces, namely, Lahore, Multan, Kashmir and Kabul. The *Subas* of Multan, Kashmir and Kabul, although under separate governors, acknowledged the supremacy of the Governor of Lahore.

### Chief Officials

Lahore was the capital of the *Suba* of the Punjab. The principal authorities running the administration at the capital were: (1) *Subadar*, (2) *Dewan*, (3) *Bakhshi*, (4) *Sadar*, (5) *Qazi*, (6) *Waqai Nawis*, (7) *Bayutat*, (8) *Muhtsib* or Censor.

He was the head of the government in the province. His other titles were *Nazim* and *Sipah Salar*. The first title refers to his being the head of the administration, whereas the second is indicative of his position as the commander of the military force stationed in the area. He had multifarious duties to perform. The most important of his functions were to maintain order, to ensure the smooth collection of revenue, to execute royal decrees and regulations, to suppress local risings, to conduct major military operations near his area (when needed), to ensure the efficient working of the machinery of justice, to supervise the conduct of subordinate officials, to make recommendations regarding promotions, demotions, reward and punishments, and to keep the Emperor informed of all happenings in his territory.

Minor provinces were sometimes entrusted to the governors of adjoining provinces. That thing was done sometimes as a mark of favour, and sometimes with a view to exercising a better control of administrative work. For instance, Ali Mardan was appointed by Shah Jahan as the governor of both Lahore and Kashmir. The same emperor at another time assigned both Lahore and Multan to Yamin-ud-Drula.

The governors were always chosen from among very capable military officers. Generally, the best men were selected for Lahore because of its strategic importance.

Next in importance to the *Subadar* was the *Dewan*. He was selected by the Imperial *Dewan* and was directly under the Central Government. Thus, he was not only independent of the *Subadar*, but was also a sort of check upon him.

The *Dewan* was the head of the revenue administration. The duties of his office were to collect revenue, to keep accounts of all income and expenditure, to disburse salaries and decide all cases concerning fiscal matters. The *Dewan* was expected to send periodical reports regularly to the centre on the state of the finances of the *Suba*. There were several subordinate officials to assist him in the discharge of his responsibilities, namely, (1) *Peshkar*—a type of private secretary, (2) *Darogha*, (3) *Mushrif*, a sort of headclerk, (4) *Tehsildar-l-Daftarkhana*—treasurer, (5) other people such as *Munsif*, *Hazur Nawis*, *Suba Nawis*, *Muharir Khalsa*, *Muharir Daftir*, etc.



He was another very important official in the *Suba*. He was officer-in-charge of the military establishment. His agents in the *Sarkars* or districts held yearly inspections of horses and soldiers. He was also responsible for paying salaries to the *mansabdars*. He also had the duty to look to all the organizational details of operations undertaken by the *Suba* authorities. Like the *Dewan*, he also sent regular periodical reports to the Centre on the state of affairs in the *Suba*.

He was the head of the religious department and, as such, recommended to the Central government deserving cases of pious and learned men for the grant of land endowments. Sometimes, he was also given the responsibility for looking after the administration of law and justice.

He headed the judicial department. A *Qazi* was posted in every big town and *Faujdari* headquarters. Smaller towns and villages had no *Qazis* posted in them, but it was always open to them to take their cases to the *Qazis* of the neighbouring places.

The agency through which the Centre learnt the news of the *Suba* consisted of *Waqai Nawis*, *Sawani Nigar*, *Khufia Nawis* and *Harkarajat*. They all constituted the intelligence department of the government. The postal department formed, in those days, a part of the intelligence department, because the organization that collected the news was also responsible for communicating it to the Centre.

He represented the *Khan-i-Saman* of the Centre in the *Suba*. He registered the property of deceased persons in order to recover the state dues from them. He made provisions for *Karkhanas* (workshops), fixed the prices of articles, looked after roads and buildings, supervised imperial stores, took charge of escheated property and looked to the comforts of the Emperor when he was in the *Suba*.

### The Sarkar Administration

Every *Sarkar* had a *Faujdar*, an *Amalgazar*, a *Qazi*, a *Kotwal* a *Bitikchi* and a *Khazandar*.

He was the head of the *Sarkar* administration. Always a *mansabdar* of high rank, he was appointed directly by the Emperor and was also responsible to him for the efficiency of his work. But, in practice, he worked under

the supervision of the provincial *Bakhshi*. His duties were to maintain peace and order, to keep roads safe from robbers and thieves, and to enforce Imperial regulations. He had a small military force under his command and with its help he collected the revenue, put down smaller uprisings, took cognizance of all violent crimes and made demonstrations of force to overawe opposition.

He was the representative of the provincial *Dewan* in the *Sarkar* and was popularly known as *Karori*. He had considerable staff to help him in his work. He collected revenue, protected the legitimate interests of the peasantry, advanced and recovered *taccavi* loans, supervised the working of the state treasury in the *Sarkar* and maintained accouts.

He was next to the *Amalgazar* in revenue matters. He was in charge of land records and revenue assessment. All functions associated with these duties were performed by him. He was assisted by a number of subordinates.

### Pargana Administration

The *Pargana* was the lowest fiscal unit which was placed under the charge of a *Tehsildar*. It was here that the revenue was actually paid, for all *Muqaddams* from the villages made the payment of their revenue collections here. The *Tehsildar* was assisted by considerable staff in the carrying out of his duties.

He was the executive officer of the *Pargana* and was responsible for its general administration. He maintained law and order, helped in the collection of revenue, had control over the treasury, sent reports to the higher authorities and reported cases to *Kotwal* of the *Sarkar*.

He was the treasurer of the *Pargana* and had duties corresponding to those of the *Khazandar* in the *Sarkar*.

He was the head of all the *Patwaris* in the *Pargana*. He had to keep the same records for the *Pargana* as the *Patwari* had to keep for the villages under his charge. The office of the *Qanungo* was a storehouse of information relating to land tenures, nature of the soil and assessment and collection of land revenue. His office dated from very old times.

### **Town Administration**

All important towns were administered by special officials who were called *Kotwals*. A *Kotwal* was appointed by the Central Government on the recommendation of the local authorities. He had a large staff and contingent of about 50 horsemen under him for help in the performance of his vast functions. He was in charge of internal defence, public health and sanitation, watch and ward duties, control of markets, care and disposal of heirless property, care of people's conduct, prevention of crime, prevention of soil abuses, regulation of cemeteries, and slaughter-houses and many other duties. The *Kotwal* of the capital town, Lahore, was invariably an official of high rank and great authority.

### **Village Administration**

The villages in the Mughal Period continued to have the same old pattern of organization and administration as had come down the centuries. The Mughal rulers did not interfere with, alter or modify, the local government of village communities. Of course, the State officials maintained a sort of contact with them, but the villagers were largely left to themselves. The Government did not bother so long as the revenue was paid regularly. The *Muqaddam* and the *Patwari* were the two principal village functionaries. The *Muqaddam* was responsible for revenue collection. For that work, he was paid a certain commission which was generally 2·5 per cent of the total revenue collected. The *Patwari* was given a circle to look after, and it consisted of a number of villages. It was his duty to maintain records of land tenure, agricultural produce and crops regularly and maintained a weather journal on which were based any claims for remission the cultivators might demand.

### **Revenue Administration**

The revenue administration which was in use in the Punjab during the Mughal Period was first organized by Akbar. He did not feel satisfied with the existing practices which were mostly arbitrary and effected a number of radical changes which were collectively known as the *Zabti* system. Literally, the name indicates a system based on regulations, and refers to the new

rules laid down by the Government regarding the method of assessment, determination of State demand for revenue and mode of payment. Akbar introduced a ten-year settlement under the supervision of Raja Todar Mal. First of all, the land to be brought under the settlement was properly surveyed and measured. Then, it was classified into four categories—*Polaj*, *Parauthi*, *chhachhar* and *Banjar*. *Polaj* was the best quality of land which was cultivated every year. *Parauthi* came next and was left fallow once in a while. *Chhachhar* came third. This was oftener left fallow than cultivated. *Banjar* was of the worst quality and was cultivated only occasionally. The first two classes were further classified into three categories—good, middling and bad. Then law of averages was applied and the annual average for each category of land was worked out. This average was then standardized by taking the average for a period of ten years. One-third of the annual average, thus standardized, was fixed as the State demand for revenue.

Besides the *Zabti* system described above, there were two other revenue systems, *Galla Baksh* (cropsharing) and *Nusq* (village assessment). The former was in use in far-off places where the measurement of land presented a difficult problem ; whereas the latter assumed importance after Akbar's death. the *Zabti* system fell growingly into disuse.

The revenue was collected both in kind and in cash. For payment in cash, the prevailing prices were taken into account.

As for the official machinery dealing with the revenue affairs of the State at various levels, it has already been discussed in the earlier part of this chapter.

### **Judicial Administration**

There was no single system of law prevalent in the country. In civil cases, Hindus and Muslims were governed by their separate religious codes. The village *Panchayats* made use of their own long-established customs and wages in disposing of cases that come before them. In criminal cases, however, the same law (and that was Islamic) was applied to all, irrespective of religion. Justice was both cheap and speedy as compared with that of our times. No time was wasted in recording proceedings and preparing huge files as it is done today. But punishments were generally very heavy. Capital punishment after torture, impalement,



trampling by elephants, crucifixion, beheading, flaying alive, etc. are only a few instances. These punishments were generally awarded to political offenders. Usually, the death sentence had to be confirmed by the Emperor before it was carried out. Horrible punishments like mutilation and whipping were awarded in the case of serious moral offences. Justice was also a source of income to the State, as more often than not the awarded punishments were in the form of heavy fines.

For the dispensation of justice there were a large number of courts, some high, some low. The highest court was the Emperor himself. His judgment was final and no appeal could be made against his decision. He was assisted in this work by some legal officials. In the *suba*, the *Nazim* represented the Emperor in that work. Below him, there were several officials who were associated with that work, such as *Sadr*, *Qazi*, *Dewan*, etc. But generally, they dealt with cases which pertained to their peculiar fields. At the lowest rung of the ladder were the village *panchayats* carrying their centuries-old judicial functions.

#### Books for Further Study

1. Ibn Hasan : *Central Structure of the Mughal Empire*
2. P. Saran : *The Provincial Administration of Mughals*
3. S.R. Sharma : *Mughal Government and Administration*
4. J.N. Sarkar : *Mughal Administration*
5. B.S. Nijjar : *Punjab under the Great Mughals*

## CHAPTER XII

### PUNJAB IN THE MUGHAL TIMES

#### I

#### Social and Economic Conditions

Chroniclers of the Mughal Period took very little notice of the economic and social life of the people. They wrote more about the king, nobles, saints and servants than about the common man. There are, however, two contemporaneous Persian works which give us some information about the social and economic life of the Punjab of that period. One of them is the *Ain-i-Akbri* of Abul Fazal and the other is the *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh* of Munshi Sujan Rai of Batala. The latter work particularly is very useful for this aspect of our study. Its author was a Punjabi and in his work, which he wrote towards the close of the seventeenth century, he gives us some important and interesting information about the social and economic life of his homeland. Besides, a few European missionaries and travellers also visited the Punjab in the seventeenth century have made some significant remarks about the different aspects of the Punjab society of their times. Moreover, through a careful study of the contemporaneous Persian works and the works of the Sikh writers, we can also find some scattered references about the life of the common man. Thus, through these different sources we can form an idea of how our Punjab ancestors lived three or four hundred years ago.

Sources of Our Study

#### Economic life : Agriculture, Industries and Trade<sup>1</sup>

The Punjab was a rich and fertile province of the Mughal Empire. The bulk of its population lived on agriculture. In the days of Akbar, the total area of the cultivable land of the Punjab was 1,62,55,643 *bighas*. But towards the end of the Mughal period, its area under cultivation was increased to 2,43,19,60 *bighas*. The revenue from

(a) Agriculture

1 M. Akbar : *The Punjab under the Mughals*, pp. 16—17

the peasants was collected according to the well-known "Zabti" system. First, the land was measured with a standard *jarib* made of a bamboo with two iron rings on the two sides. Secondly, the land was classified into four general classes—*Polaj*, *Parauthi*, *Chhachhar* and *Banjar*. From the first two classes, the State demanded one-third of the total produce, and from the remaining two classes, the State, during the first five years, demanded only a very nominal revenue. The revenue was generally collected in cash, and the cash rates for different crops were determined for different areas on the basis of rates prevailing in those areas during the years 1571 to 1581. The State's share from the peasant was commuted into cash according to those standard rates. The total land revenue of the Punjab in 1594 was Rs 1,39,86,460 and in 1707 it rose to Rs. 2,06,53,302.<sup>1</sup>

From the above, it can be safely concluded that the Mughal Emperors took special care for bringing more and more land under cultivation. They granted *taccavi* loans to the peasants whenever the latter required money to improve their lands. Akbar once even remitted the land revenue for the whole year in respect of a certain part of the Punjab when Guru Arjan represented to him that the people needed relief.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in the days of Shah Jahan when a severe famine occurred in the Punjab, the Emperor set up kitchens from which free food was served to all those who were affected by it. Besides, the Mughals used to collect a special tax, called "Dahsiri tax, from the peasants and the proceeds of that tax were exclusively utilized for famine relief. Occasionally, the Mughal Emperors would also try to provide the peasants with better irrigational facilities. Every possible encouragement was given to dig wells and fit them with Persian wheels. Under Shah Jahan, the Punjab Governor, Ali Mardan Khan, even undertook the digging of a canal from the Ravi at the point where it enters the plains. This scheme cost about one lakh of rupees in the currency of those days. It is also said that the Mughal Emperor made some experiments in the cultivation of the choicest products of Persia and Kabul. Vetches of Kabul and muskmelons of Persia were tried with great success.

1. The Punjab was divided into 14 *sarkars* in 1655. It had 232 *Mahals* in 1594. In the days of Aurangzeb, the number of *parganas* or *mahals* increased to 214 (1665) and 358 (1700).

2. Latif, *History of the Punjab*, p. 252

Industrially too, the Punjab made a remarkable progress in the Mughal times. The biggest industrial centre was the capital City of Lahore. Abul Fazal, the court historian of Akbar, says that Akbar was a great lover of handicrafts and extended his patronage to all types of manufactures. The same writer also informs us that the imperial workshops (*karkhanas*) of Lahore and Gujrat turned out many masterpieces of workmanship, and the figures, the pattern knot and the variety of fashions astonished the merchants and travellers from foreign countries. Shawls of a special texture, 'Mayan' and carpets of superior quality were prepared in Lahore and even exported to other places. From Abul Fazal's *Ain-i-Akbri* we learn that there were more than 1000 workshops of shawls in Lahore alone in Akbar's time.

**Industries—  
Lahore, a Great  
Industrial Centre**

Besides Lahore, Sialkot, Gujrat, Bajwara (near Hoshiarpur) and Sultanpur were the other great industrial towns of the Punjab in the Mughal Period. Sialkot had acquired a great fame for providing the best type of paper, such as Mansinghi paper and silken paper of fine texture to the Mughal State. Gujrat, a town founded by Akbar, was known for the manufacture of Jamdhari weapons and embroidery. Sultanpur Lodhi in the Jullundur Doab was noted for manufacturing printed cloth and was well known for its 'chhinta' and 'Dolais'. Bajwara was famous for the cloth industry and especially for the gold-embroidered cloth called 'Fotah'. The Sikh Gurus had established many towns in the Punjab, such as Kartarpur, Taran Taran, Ramdaspur or Amritsar, Shri Hargobindpur, Kiratpur and Anandpur and, of all these towns, Amritsar developed rapidly and in, course of time, became a flourishing industrial town.

**Other Important  
Towns**

The Punjab also had many flourishing mineral industries. Silver, copper, brass and zinc were the principal minerals which were used in those days. The Kheora salt mines provided most of the salt requirements of the Punjabi people.

**Minerals**

Both the capital cities of the Punjab—Lahore and Multan—lay on the route connecting Kabul, Qandhar and Persia with the great Indian cities ; and because of this geographical position, Punjab carried on a brisk trade with Asian countries, on the one



hand, and the principal cities of India, on the other. Sher Shah, by abolishing a number of inland custom duties, by constructing a road from Agra to Lahore, which later on was extended from Lahore to Rohtas (near the Jehlum), and also by building *Sarais*, had given a great impetus to the trade. Jahangir, who spent most of his time in the Punjab, further improved the condition of the Punjab roads. On the road from Agra to Lahore, he set up a pillar at every three *kos* and a well at every one *kos*. Shady trees were planted on both sides of the road. Jahangir also repaired the roads from Poonch to Kashmir. Besides, the stages on the road were well provisioned and protected.

When the Arabs stopped the trans-shipment of goods through the Red Sea in the seventh century, the trade once again had to be diverted through the Black Sea, Harat and Kabul. This was a welcome opportunity for the traders not only to rehabilitate their economy, but to open up new markets in India for their merchandise. As a result of this, there was a phenomenal increase in trade, and important commercial centres, such as Constantinople and Kabul, became the hub of activity and also the headquarters for the soldiers of fortune. The Qandhar Pass witnessed a continual flow of trade into India and, in fact, became a focal point for a thriving commercial artery, pumping goods from the countries in the north to as far down as Lahore.

The second route, which passed through Multan and Qandhar, linking up India and Persia, had been established during the Arab conquest. Now both the routes began to be exploited to their fullest utility. But considering the difficulties and restrictions which traders had to face in those days of highway robberies, open and unashamed violence, poor means of transport, and insecure lines of communication, it is indeed surprising that so many merchants and traders were still abroad on those routes all the year round. Those pilgrims of profit symbolized a commercial daring which in those days was a rare phenomenon.

There was yet another route which linked the Punjab with Tibet and Western China. It ran through the Punjab and Kashmir, and carried a vast volume of the trade. However, the ruler of Tibet, realizing the potential dangers of a long and indefensible trade route, decided to seal it off. The invasion of

his country by Shah Jahan had brought home to him the idea of paralysing those trade channels. Meanwhile, the internal trade continued to flourish along the traditional rivers and road routes, practically in the same way as during the Hindu times. The Muslim kings, particularly the Great Mughals, had, of course, given a kind of solidarity to those commercial transactions, with the result that the imperial capital of Delhi and the provincial capitals, such as Multan and Lahore, expanded.

The existence of these good roads and other facilities of travel had made Lahore and Multan great centres of trade. Purchas tells us that from 12 to 14 thousand loaded camels passed through Lahore every year.<sup>1</sup> Another European, Edward Terry, says that traders of different nationalities—Armenians, Aleppo, and Gujratis—had settled in Lahore and they carried on trade with foreign countries on a large scale.<sup>2</sup> Punjab, in those days, also imported horses from Kabul, Iraq and Persia. It is said that the Sikh Gurus also gave great stimulus to this horse trade by asking their Sikhs of Kabul to make offerings of good horses instead of cash and other things. Velvet and silk were imported from Khorasan, dry fruits from Kabul, spices from Agra and quicksilver, vermillion, coral and turbans from Ahmedabad. The principal articles of export from the Punjab were shawls, carpets and embroidered goods. Edward Terry, who visited Lahore in the second decade of the seventeenth century, says that Lahore was also a great market for indigo trade, so much so that in Europe indigo began to be called “Lauri” or the commodity of Lahore. Indigo was brought from different parts of India and sold in the Lahore market.<sup>3</sup>

Besides, fairs or *melas* greatly stimulated inland trade in those days. The custom of sale and barter of horses and other animals on the occasion of religious fairs was prevalent in those days. Such fairs or *melas* were held at different shrines and sometimes on the occasion of certain festivals at different places. For example, an annual fair was held at Achal near Batala on the Baisakhi day. The traders used

1. Purchas : *Early Travels*, p. 63

2. *India of Jahangir*, p. 30

3. M. Akbar : *The Punjab under the Mughals*, p. 241

to bring their wares and even livestock for sale or exchange.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, at Dhonkal near Wazirabad a fair was held. It lasted two months. A large number of goods and animals were exchanged there. Another fair of that type was held at Budhira in Gurgaon. Similarly, when the Sikhs used to come from different parts of the country on the occasions of Diwali and Baisakhi at Amritsar, Kiratpur and Anandpur, they would, besides attending the religious meetings, meet in private and generally make a number of trade transactions.

Regarding the rates, things were generally very cheap. In the days of Akbar, wheat was sold at 12 *dams* per maund. Of course, the maund at that time contained 55½ lb. The rate of gram was 16 *dams* per maund and *ghee* was available at less than 4 *dams* a seer. *Dam* or *Bahloli* or *paisa* was a copper coin and was 1/40th of a rupee<sup>2</sup> (*Rupiya*) which was a silver coin weighing 11½ *mashas* and containing 172·5 grains of pure silver. Regarding the wages, unskilled labourers were generally paid 2 *dams* a day. The remuneration of skilled workers, like masons and carpenters varied from 5 to 10 *dams*. But, despite such low wages, the workers were quite well-off because of the low prices.

## II

### Social Conditions in the Punjab

The Muslims were divided into four main classes. The first was the nobility or the *mansabdars* who were held in high esteem and occupied high posts in civil and military departments. That Muslim aristocratic class was divided into two sections. The first was of the foreign Amirs who were further sub-divided into two classes : (i) Turanis who came from the north of the Oxus and were of the Sunni sect ; and (ii) Iranis who came from the south of the Oxus and belonged to the Shia sect. The other section was formed by the native nobles, who may also be divided into two sections : (a) the Afghans who outnumbered the Mughals ; and (b) the Indian Muslims who were born in India and were the imperial servants and held high positions in civil and

1. See Munshi Sujan Rai's : *Khalast-ut-Twarikh*, p. 301, as quoted by M. Akbar in *The Punjab Under the Mughals*.

2. It was first introduced by Sher Shah ; see the *Ain-i-Akbari*, p. 32

military departments. They were small in number, but were highly paid and spent their earnings most extravagantly.

The middle class of the Muslims comprised the professionals, such as scholars, religious men, lower officials, merchants and traders. De laet, who visited the Punjab in 1631, wrote, "The people of this class were leading quite a comfortable and peaceful life. The economic condition of the merchant class was better than that of others. Although their average income was probably not large, yet it was enough to meet their needs."

The lower class comprised workmen, labourers, farmers, petty shopkeepers, domestic servants and all other lower-grade workers.

The Hindus were divided into their traditional four classes. The Brahmans, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas and the Sudras. The Hindus formed the majority of the population. There were also many well-to-do chiefs among them. The lower branches of administration, especially the department of revenue and finance, were manned by them. The Khūts, Chaudharies and Muqaddams were all Hindus. The principal merchants, businessmen and traders as well as petty shopkeepers were mostly Hindus. They had almost monopolized the banking or money-lending profession. The Hindu traders and money-lenders of Multan were well known throughout India. Hindu *Banjārās* were attached to the armies, as, there being no regular commissariat arrangements, the provisions to the Mughal troops were supplied by those hereditary itinerant merchants.

The lowest class of society during that period was that of the slaves and eunuchs. "Slavery was a recognized institution in Mughal India as it was everywhere else in the world." Each of the Mughal officials kept a regular army of servants, wretchedly paid and with their wages often in arrears, but generally honest; yet they were better-off than the majority of the population on whom they preyed. Apart from them, there were the regular slaves, a class which was generally recruited from among prisoners of war, persons unable to pay the government taxes, or those who, in times of famine, sold themselves, or were sold by their parents for their bread.

Socially, the Punjab during the two centuries of Mughal rule witnessed some remarkable and even wholesome changes. Akbar's



enlightened policy of religious toleration had made such a deep impression upon the minds of the Hindus and the Muslims that, despite the fact that his next two successors slightly modified his policy and the third even repudiated it, the general masses in the Punjab continued to live in an atmosphere of friendliness. The catholic teachings of the Sikh Gurus also greatly contributed to the development of such an atmosphere.

**Growth of  
Friendliness  
among the  
Hindus and the  
Muslims**

Of course, sometimes this atmosphere was ruffled by the intolerant acts of the successors of Akbar or by the unsympathetic attitude of the high-brow Muslim nobles and the *Qazis* of the Punjab, yet, on the whole, the Hindus and the Muslims in the villages and the towns lived as the sons of a common soil. Todar Mal's great reform by which he ordered that the revenue records in the State should be kept in Persian made the Hindus learn Persian and, thus, indirectly brought them under the influence of Muslim teachers. This association with the Muslim teachers and the study of the language of the Muslim ruling class brought the Hindus and the Muslims very close to one another. Moreover, Akbar's practice of 'Jharoka Darshan' which was continued in the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan made the Hindus and the Muslims meet together to pay their respects to the sovereign.

**Some Important  
Factors Respon-  
sible for Such  
an Atmosphere**

From the writings of Jahangir, Mohsan Fani, Munshi Sujan Rai, Chandar Bhan and Bhai Nand Lal, we find that a feeling of amity was growing among the general masses of the Hindus and the Muslims. Jahangir in his *Tuzak* mentions that a large number of Muslims had become the followers of Guru Arjan. Mohsan Fani says that a large number of Muslims admired the Sikh Gurus. Mian Mir, a Muslim saint of Lahore, went out of his way to persuade Jahangir to get Guru Hargobind released. Sayyid Budhu Shah joined Guru Gobind Singh with his five hundred disciples to fight against the hill rajas of the Punjab. And when Guru Gobind Singh, after the battle of Chamkaur, was pursued by the Mughals, it was his Muslim friends, Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan, who escorted him in a litter on their shoulders and carried him to a place of safety. The Guru's Persian teacher, Qazi Pir Mohammad, too, gave him every possible help during his period of hardships and suffering. Bhai Nand Lal held a very high position among the personal staff of Prince

**Some Examples**

Muzzam Shah and greatly influenced his master's policy in favour of the Sikh Gurus. The Muslim Nawab of Malerkotla strongly pleaded the cause of Guru Gobind Singh's infant sons when Wazir Khan wanted to brick them up alive. Besides, Munshi Sujan Rai and the Sikh tradition tell us that the Hindus and the Muslims of those days had begun to worship some common shrines. For example, 'Guga' or the serpent-god was worshipped both by the Hindus and the Muslims. The Hindus worshipped him under the name of Guga Bir and the Muslims under the name of Guga Pir or Zahir Pir. The guardians of the tomb of Shah Shams near Kalanaur were Hindus, the descendants of Dipal of Baba Lal Puri,<sup>2</sup> a devotee of Balak Rupri of Achal (Gurdaspur District) was held in great honour both by the Hindus and the Muslims of the area. The tombs of Shaikh Farid Shakar Garh in Pakpattan and Shah Daula in Gujrat were also visited by the Hindus and the Muslims alike. The cult of 'Sakhi Sarwar', too had both Hindu and Muslim following.

**Hindu and Muslim Worshipped Some Common Shrines**

Thus, from the above illustrations, it can be safely concluded that during the two centuries of Mughal Rule in India, the bulk of the people, particularly the lower classes among the Hindus and the Muslims, had begun to live in an atmosphere of cordiality.

The caste-system, the steel-frame of the Hindu society, had also received a serious blow at the hands of the Sikh Gurus. The great institution of the Sikhs—the *Sangat* and the *pangat* (*Langar*)—encouraged inter-association and inter-dining between the low-castes and the high-castes. This was against the basic principles of the caste-system. Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan, by instituting separate marriage and death rites, greatly dispensed with the services of the Brahman priestly class. The absence of restrictions in matters of eating and particularly meat-eating among the Sikhs also dealt a severe blow to the Brahmanical creed of the day. Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh, by putting the

**The Punjab under the Gurus Revolted against the Caste-System**

1. See Sujan Rai's *Khulasat-ut-Twarikh*, p. 290

2. *Ibid*, p. 291

Baba Lal was a khatri. He lived in Dhianpur near Batala. He was a disciple of Chetan Swami and his religious discourses with Dara Shikola are not only interesting but illuminating.

sword in the hands of the common people threw a challenge to the privileged position of the Kshatryas. But it was in 1699 that Guru Gobind Singh took a strong and definite step against the caste-system. He enjoined upon his Sikhs not to hold faith in the institution of caste. They were all equal and could marry from among themselves<sup>1</sup>. They were also not to hold faith in the old customs and the caste prejudices. They could become members of the Commonwealth of the Khalsa only if they were '*kul-nash*' and '*krit-nash*'.

These attacks on the Brahmanical supremacy and the caste-system were not taken lying down by the Brahmans. They represented to Akbar and even persuaded him to take action against Guru Arjan ; but Akbar, being himself an enlightened emperor, took no notice of those complaints of the Brahmans. In the days of Guru Gobind Singh, the Brahmans again raised some hue and cry. It was a Brahman servant who handed over the children of Guru Gobind Singh to the Mughal officials for punishment. But all the efforts of the Brahmans proved abortive and the caste-system in the Mughal Period lost a good deal of its hold on the Hindu society of the Punjab. It was, of course, impossible to do away with this time-honoured institution of the caste ; but still the teachings and the institutions of the Sikh Gurus broke the great spell that the caste-system had exercised on the minds of the people and, thus, the Punjab led all other provinces of India in revolting against this conservative and out-of-date institution.

The Sikh Gurus also tried to reform some other glaring evils in the Hindu society of the Punjab of those days. The position of women in Society was not an honoured one. The Sikh Gurus enjoined upon the Sikhs to treat women with great consideration. The Sikhs were not to renounce the world. They were required to lead a householder's life. The Sikh Gurus, and particularly Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan, advocated strongly against the practice of '*Sati*'<sup>2</sup> and lent their full co-operation to Emperor Akbar when he decreed

Other Evils of  
the Hindu Society

1. Macauliffe : *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. V. p. 159

2. *Sati* was of three types. When a woman burnt herself on the funeral pyre of her husband, she was called *Sati*. When she sacrificed herself along with her child in the above manner, she was called '*Ma Sati*.' And if a man sacrificed himself to prove his devotion and fidelity to his wife, he was called '*Satu*'.

that 'no woman should be forced to become *Sati* against her will.' Guru Gobind Singh, while creating the Khalsa, exhorted his Sikhs not to kill their infant daughters. Rather, he made it clear that persons guilty of female infanticide were not to be admitted to the brotherhood of the Khalsa.

Child marriage and the absence of widow re-marriage were other great evils in the Hindu society. Emperor Akbar, by royal ordinances, tried to do away with these practices. But still the force of custom was so strong that, despite all the efforts of Akbar, those evil practices continued.

From the scattered references in the literature of the Mughal Period, we can form some idea of the food, dress and the houses of the people of those days. The upper classes, and particularly the Mughal nobles, the *mansabdars*, took a very rich diet. A very large number of dainty dishes were taken both at lunch and at dinner. Meats of different varieties were prepared. Fresh or dry fruit was commonly used by them and there are references that the Mughal nobles used to procure dry or fresh fruit from Kabul and Kashmir. Leat says that drinking was a common vice among them and many amongst them died of intemperance. 'Sharbat' or sweet drinks were also commonly served. Contemporaneous Persian writers also tell us that the Mughal nobles were fond of ice, even though it was very costly in those days. The use of betel-leaf was also prevalent. The smoking of tobacco had also started towards the beginning of Jahangir's reign and by the end of the reign of Aurangzeb, it had become almost a terrible vice ; so much so that Guru Gobind Singh had to issue special instructions against its use.

But the diet of the lower classes, and particularly of the workers and peasants, was very poor. It consisted of dry bread which was taken either with cooked pulse or vegetables, or butter milk. It was a luxury for them to take milk or a sweet dish.

As to the dress of the people, the upper classes of society wore very costly and gaudy dresses. Their women were generally dressed in costly silk and velvet. Shirt and 'Salwar' formed a popular dress. The nobles, too, wore 'Salwar' and shirt, but they always put on a gown of the Roman 'toga' type over the shirt. Round the waist they tied a piece of cloth generally of white colour. They always



wore turbans and their footwear consisted of costly velvet or red leather, or of emboidered shoes. The poor classes wore very simple dresses which were made of coarse cloth. There was, however, uniformity in their dress. Ordinary leather shoes, however, were worn by the lower classes. The extremely poor people, remained barefoot.

The use of varied and profuse jewellery for extra ornamentation was in vogue. The *kamarband*, an ornament for the waist, was commonly used by both the sexes. For the rest, it may be mentioned that almost every part of the body, on which some ornament could possibly be fixed or hung, was fittingly adorned. Anklets, bracelets and armlets were as popular as necklaces, collars and girdles. The nose-ring is a Muslim contribution to Indian women's face-ornaments. The Muslims made earrings much lighter, but more brilliant and valuable. The use of betel or *pan* to colour the lips as well as to sweeten the breath, and of henna to colour the palms, nails and finger-tips of hands, as well as nails and soles of the feet of women, became more common. The henna was also used to dye grey beards, moustache and hair. The children of the rich wore gold or silver bells and chains round their waists. The shoes of the nobles were of velvet, or red leather and they took off their shoes when they entered the palace.

Regarding the houses, the *mansabdars* or the Mughal nobles lived in palatial houses generally made of stone or of mortar and earth. The houses of the middle-class Hindus were made of brick or earth, and timber. But their floors were of pounded earth and Manucci says that they were generally covered with cow-dung which was regarded sacred and antiseptic by the Hindus. People in the villages, however, lived in huts or mud-houses.

As for the amusements of the people of those days we find that the upper classes were very fond of the game of the chase. They also derived great pleasure from witnessing animal fights and horse-races. Chaugan cock-fights and *kabutar-bazi* (pigeon-flying) were other popular amusements of the day. The common indoor games of the period were *chandal mandal*, chess, 'chauper' and playing-cards. The poor classes found very little leisure for amusements. But their pleasure consisted in going to a *mela* or fair and there witnessing wrestling bouts or

juggler's tricks. They sometimes also organized *bhangras* or rural dances to please themselves.

### III

#### Education, Art and Literature

There was no system of State education in the Mughal days, but still the Mughal Emperors spent very lavishly on education.

**Schools, Maktabhs and Patshalas** There was a regular department of the State under the Chief Sadar whose duty was to make grants to the educational institutions and fix allowances for those learned scholars who were imparting higher education as part of their religious duties. In the Punjab, as in other provinces, elementary education was imparted in the '*patshala*' and the '*maktab*' attached to the temples and the mosques respectively. They were mostly financed by private charity but they also received grants from the State. The higher education was imparted in a few well-known educational centres. One such centre of higher learning in the Punjab was Sialkot. Munshi Sujana Rai, of Batala, who lived in the Mughal Period was a great scholar of his time, tells us that there was a well-known college of higher learning at Sialkot. Its principal in the days of Akbar was Maulana Kamal. Under Shah Jahan, Maulvi Abdul Hakim, "the most perfect of the scholars and a man of unrivalled accomplishments" held the charge of the college. After his death, **Sialkot College** Maulvi Abdullah surnamed "Imam of the Age" took the charge of the college and 'engaged himself in the glory of the school.'<sup>1</sup>

Lahore, Gujrat, Multan, Jullundur and Sultanpur, too, were known for having seats of higher learning. Towards the close of Akbar's reign, the Jesuit Fathers had set up a **Lahore Mission School** Mission School at Lahore to impart higher learning to the sons of the nobles. This was the first English public school opened in the Punjab. It became quite popular and Jahangir even fixed a grant of Rs. 50 per month for it.

Abul Fazal in his *Ain-i-Akbari* gives us the list of the subjects of study which were popular in those days. They were arithmetic,

1. *Khulast-ut-Tawarikh*, p. 299

notation, agriculture, mensuration, geography, astronomy, politics, logic, medicine, history and divinity. Of all these, the last two subjects were the most popular. Divinity was called **Subjects of Study** *Ilahi science* and included the study of comparative religion, ethics and the development of religious philosophy. Calligraphy was another popular subject.

There existed separate *maktabs* for the education of girls ; but usually they received their education in the same school as the boy up to the primary standard, when sexual consciousness had not yet awakened ; after that stage, they were segregated and given their education, either privately or in the schools specially provided for them. The daughters of the nobles were given higher education in their own houses by learned ladies, or old men of tried morals, employed for the purpose. After acquiring primary education in the *maktab* meant for them, or at home, the girls used to be further educated by some elderly ladies of proved piety in domestic science, i.e. cooking, spinning, sewing and looking after children. Proper arrangements were made for the instruction of girls in household affairs and the subject loomed large in the curriculum designed for them.

Technical education was given in *karkhanas* (workshops) of apprenticeship. The boys who did not attend a *maktab* or *madrassa* were sent to those workshops for receiving necessary training in arts and crafts. The trading classes maintained their own schools for the instruction of their children in the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic and made suitable arrangements for the promotion of their knowledge in business and accounts. Such schools have survived even to our own times. The fact that arts and crafts, industries and commerce flourished abundantly in the Muslim Punjab points to the existence of a good system of technical education.

The Punjab is proud to have produced a number of literary giants in different languages and subjects in the Mughal Period. Persian, being the official language of the State, attracted the best talent of the land. In Akbar's days, Persian poets of the Punjab, Sher Qasim, Arsalan, Sarfi and Mullah Shirid, were among the first few topmost poets of the Court. Mir Mohammad Khan Kalan, the Governor of the Punjab, was himself a great poet, scholar and patron of men of learning. The Punjab did not lag behind in Persian prose as well, and some of the most well-known

Persian prosewriters of the period were Punjabis. Abdul Hamid Lahori, Saadullah Khan and Mullah Shah Mohammad earned great name as writers of prose.

Besides the Muslims, the Hindus of the Punjab also contributed a good deal to the Persian literature of the Mughal Period. Chandar Bhan Brahman acquired a great fame as a writer of Persian prose in the reign of Shah Jahan. Munshi Sujan Rai of Batala, the author of *Khulast-ut-Tawarikh* and Bhai Nand Lal, of Multan, the author of the famous work *Diwan-i-Goya*, flourished in the reign of Aurangzeb and greatly enriched the Persian literature.

The Punjabis took a prominent part in enriching Arabic literature also. Maulana Abdullah Sultanpuri, one of the greatest Arabic scholars of the Mughal Period, was a Punjabi, belonging to the Jullundur Doab. His best-known works are *Ismat-i-Anbia*, and *Sharufu-Shamailin Nabi*. Sheikh Muin and Qazi Nur-Ullah are other well-known Punjabis who wrote standard works in the Arabic language.

The Punjab also produced a number of great Hindi scholars in those days. One of the greatest Hindi writers of the period was Kirpa Ram. His work *Hit-Tarangini* stands almost unrivalled because of its "elegant style and charming diction."<sup>1</sup> This great work was written in 1598 and its importance lies in the fact that it is written in 'dohas' and not in 'chhands'. Bir Bal, the court humorist of Akbar, was another Punjabi who, because of his great Hindi poems, received from the Emperor the title of 'Kavi-Rai'. Raja Takht Mal, Ram Chandra and Lakshmi Narain were other great Hindi poets of the Punjab who flourished in the Mughal period. Guru Gobind Singh himself was a great Hindi poet and a number of Hindi poets attended his durbar.

Punjabi also made a remarkable progress in the Mughal Period. Its previous script 'Landa' was found to be unsuitable for its literary development and, consequently, the new alphabet invented by Guru Nanak became current and popular under the name of 'Gurmukhi'. Guru Nanak's hymns were written mostly in Punjabi. They were collected by Guru Angad and Guru Amar Das. But the greatest Punjabi poet of the Mughal Period was the fifth Sikh



**Guru—Guru Arjan.** His composition “Sukhmani” (Jewel of Peace or Psalm of Peace) in one of the “sublimest pieces” in Punjabi literature. But the most monumental work of Guru Arjan was the assembling of the *Adi* (or original) *Granth*. It incorporated in it the religious poetry which the first four Gurus had composed and also included his own numerous compositions. Many verses of Kabir and other *Bhaktas* were written in the Gurmukhi script and incorporated in the Sikh *Granth*. Some of the hymns of these *Bhaktas* were even translated into the Punjabi language in the Gurmukhi script and then included in the sacred *Granth*.

Another great Punjabi writer of the period was Bhai Gur Das. His *Waran* contains the nuggets of sound wisdom and it is because of this work that he ranks among the great Punjabi poets of the Mughal times. Other great Punjabi poets of the period were Kahna, Chhaju, Shah Lal Husain, Shah Husain, Sultan Bahu, Shah Sharf, Bullah Shah, Ali Haider and Pilo. These poets composed verses on religion or on the philosophy of life. *Prem Sumarg* and Bhai Mani Singh’s *Gyan Ratnavali* are some of the best specimens of prose writing of those days.

The Punjab also received more than its share in the architectural works on which the Mughals spent very lavishly. Agra, Fatehpur, Delhi and Lahore remained the imperial headquarters at one time or another; and so most of the magnificent buildings of the Mughals are found in these cities. Hussain Quli Khan was the first Punjab Governor who built a beautiful fort and a few other edifices in Lahore. Akbar, during the time when he made Lahore his imperial headquarters, added a few more magnificent buildings. Jahangir spent two major portions of his reign in Lahore and so he raised a number of buildings to accommodate the big grandness of the State. The tombs of Jahangir and Asaf Khan are the two most magnificent buildings which were constructed in the neighbourhood of Lahore in the Mughal Period. Emperor Shah Jahan, by laying out the famous Shalimar Garden in imitation of the Shalimar Garden of Kashmir, further added to the beauty of Lahore. It was also in Shah Jahan’s reign that the famous Wazir Khan’s mosque, which, according to Sujan Rai, “looks like a beautiful mole on the cheek of the town,” was constructed. Aurangzeb too built a few magnificent edifices in Lahore. He constructed a huge

**Important Works  
of Architecture  
in Lahore**

dam or embankment, two *kos* in length, to protect Lahore from the floods of the Ravi. He also built the famous Jama Masjid opposite to the bank of the River Ravi which, according to Sujan Rai, cost him more than five lakhs of rupees in those days.

Besides those at Lahore, several tombs and mosques of great beauty were built at Jullundur, Ibrahimabad, Sultanpur, Batala and Sialkot. A number of towns were also founded in the Punjab in the Mughal Period. Sher Shah built the famous town of Rohtas (near the Jehlum). Akbar founded Attock, Banaras and Gujrat. In his period, Guru Ram Das laid the foundation of Ramdaspur (the present-day Amritsar) and Guru Arjan founded Taran Taran and Kartarpur. In the reign of Jahangir, Guru Hargobind founded Kiratpur. Under Shah Jahan, his Governor in the Punjab, Ali Mardan, founded the city of Ibrahimabad and further added to its beauty by laying out a beautiful garden like the Shalimar Garden of Kashmir. In Aurangzeb's period, Guru Gobind Singh founded the present city of Anandpur.

**New Towns  
Founded—Gujrat  
Amritsar, Ibrahi-  
mabad, Anand  
pur**

#### IV

#### Religious Condition

The most important and organized religious movement in the Punjab in the Mughal Period was Sikhism. Coincidentally, the ten Sikh Gurus (1469—1708) and the six Great Mughal Emperors (1526-1707) began and ended their careers almost at the same time. The Sikh Gurus, by their wholesale condemnation of the caste-system, the emptiness of rituals and idolatry, and by laying great stress on the unity of Godhead and love of mankind raised the Punjabis spiritually and morally. Sikhism became a popular creed in the Punjab and made a deep impression upon the masses. According to the Sikh tradition, almost the entire Majha and Malwa peasantry embraced this new faith under the pontificates of Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind. When Guru Gobind Singh assembled his Sikhs at Anandpur in 1699 to create the Khalsa, as many as 80,000 attended the conference. It is quite probable that there must have been a very large number of them who, on account of one reason or another, could not attend it. That the Sikh creed had a great appeal for the people of the Punjab in those days is borne out by the remarks that a non-Sikh writer, Sujan Rai, makes in his great

**(i) Growth of  
Sikhism**

work, the *Khulasat-ul-Tawarikh*, written in 1697. In it, he says :

“The essence of the worship of this sect is the recital of the verses of their Guide which they sing with instrumental and vocal music and with a heart-ravishing chant. They have removed the effects of foul attachment from their minds and cast away from their hearts the obscuring veil or impediments. In their eyes, kinsmen and strangers are alike, friends and enemies are the same. They live with devotion to their friends and without quarrel with their enemies. The reliance which this sect has on its leader, is seldom seen in other sects. In the name of their guide (Guru), they consider it an act of great piety to attend on travellers. If a wayfarer arrives at midnight and takes the name of Baba Nanak, every such stranger and unknown man is treated as a brother and friend and served in a worthy manner.”<sup>1</sup>

This estimate of Sikhism from the pen of an impartial historian is a clear testimony to the fact that even after two centuries of its career, it stuck to the basic teachings of Baba Nanak and was held in high esteem by the people of the Punjab in general. Its watchwords were love and friendship with friends and strangers. Of course, it was after these remarks had been made that Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa. But this much is certain that the general impression about Sikhism, up to the eve of the foundation of the Khalsa and even long after it had adopted the policy of offering armed resistance to the Mughals, was that it was essentially a religion of devotion and service. The Sikhs had handled the sword in the time of Guru Hargobind and ninety years had elapsed before these remarks were made by Sujan Rai. This proves beyond doubt that the Sikhs, during that long period, had not misused the sword.

Besides Sikhism, other popular religious sects of the Hindus in those days were the *Jogis* and the *Udasis*. The founder of the *Jogi* sect was Gorakhnath and its headquarters were Tilla Bala-nath. Its followers practised all types of austerities and generally lived on alms. The founder of the *Udasi* sect in the Punjab was Baba Siri Chand, the elder son of Guru Nanak. The *Udasis* did not lead a settled life like ordinary householders ; otherwise they held faith

1. Sujan Rai : *Khulasat-ul-Tawarikh*, p. 294

in Guru Nanak and his teachings. There was another popular sect among the Hindus living near Batala in those days. Its followers held the founder of their sect, Balak Rupī, in high esteem.

Not only Hinduism but Islam, too, produced some well-known Muslim divines called 'Sufis'. These Muslim Sufis, like the Sikh Gurus, did not hold faith in empty rituals and the formalities of religion. Their creed was that "God is within the heart and readily listens to the soundless language of the heart." There is no use going to the mosque or approaching Him through formal or mechanical prayers. They also held that a man of God must love all, whether they be Muslims or Hindus. Thus, the Sufis, like the Sikh Gurus, not only emphasized the unity of Godhead, but also the brotherhood of man. Their followers, like those of the Sikh Gurus, belonged to both the communities, Hindus and Muslims.

Some of the well-known Sufis of the Mughal period were Sheikh Ishaq Kaku, Shams Tabriz of Multan, Shah Sulaiman, Mian Mir,<sup>1</sup> Sayyid Buddhu Shah and Mian Bayazid. The last-named Sufi even founded a sect known as Roshanayas. Besides, there was the shrine of Baba Farid in Pakpattan and its charge was always held by a Sufi of great reputation. This shrine was a popular place of pilgrimage for all those who held eclectic ideas about religion. Baba Nanak and Akbar also paid visits to this shrine several times.

Though the Sikh Gurus and the Muslim Sufi saints did a lot to raise the spiritual and moral standards of the people, yet there were many lakhs of them, both in Hinduism and in Islam, who continued to worship the old deities in the old fashion. Their religious beliefs, rather superstitious beliefs, consisted in keeping fasts, making pilgrimages, visiting shrines and worshipping minor deities for cer-

(iv) The 'Devī' cult  
1. Mian Mir's original name was Mohammad Mir. He was born in Siestan in 1550. He was a saint of great eminence and in the time of Akbar had settled at Lahore.

Jahangir held him in high esteem and in his memories he writes, "Truly, he is the beloved of God. In sanctity and purity of soul, he has no equal in his age." Mian Mir had good relations with the Sikh Gurus. (See the lives of Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind.)



tain selfish ends. One of the popular cults of this type was the cult of Devi. This cult was more popular in the submontane tracts of the Punjab.

The Devi or goddess was worshipped in many forms—Durga, Kali and Bhawani. It is said that Guru Angad, before he embraced Sikhism, was a devout worshipper of the goddess Durga and used to lead a party of pilgrims to Jwala Mukhi every year. It is said that Guru Gobind Singh, too, performed a big sacrifice to invoke the help of the goddess Durga before he invested his Khalsa with the sword. Akbar, too, paid a visit to the Devi at Jwala Mukhi and there is a tradition that Akbar went there barefooted and made the offering of a golden canopy.

The temples of the Devi are found in different parts of the Punjab. There is one at Mani Majra where Mansa Devi is worshipped. There is a temple of goddess Durga at Naina Devi. There is also a Devi's temple at Nagarkot, and at a distance of 10 miles is the historic temple of Jwala Mukhi. There are also temples of the Devi at Chintpurani and Budhera. The Devi's another great temple is at Thanesar where Bhawani is worshipped. The common practice among the votaries of the Devi was to visit the temples of the Devi at the time of annual or six-monthly fairs, make their offerings and invoke her favour and blessings.

Another important cult which was quite popular in those days was the Guga<sup>1</sup> cult. Guga, the serpent-god, was originally a Hindu hero who had acquired mastery over the snakes and had vanished beneath the earth on the ninth of Bhadon. It was on this day that the votaries of Guga used to go to the shrines of their deity. These shrines were scattered over different parts of the Punjab. It is said that Guga was worshipped both by the Hindus and the Muslims, particularly by the lower classes of both these communities. The Hindus worshipped Guga as a Hindu hero—Guga 'Bir' (hero)—whereas the Muslims worshipped him as the Guga 'pir' (Zahir Pir). The main symbols at the shrine of Guga were : (i) a 'Chhari' or a long bamboo stick, (ii) and a blue flag.

1. Guru Gobind Singh, while creating the Khalsa, said to his Sikhs, "Let no one associate with, much less offer presents to, those who worship Sarwar, Guga and similar pirs."

Macauliffe : *Sikh Religion*, Volume V, page 158

Another popular practice among the Hindus and the Muslims was to visit the sacred shrines and tombs of holy persons. The Tomb of 'Shah Shams' near Kalanaur and that of Imam Ali Haq at Sialkot and the shrines of Baba Farid at Pakpattan and Baba Balak Rupī in Achal were frequently visited by the Hindus and the Muslims. The worship of 'Raja Rasalu,' who is said to have killed seven *Rakshases*, was also current in the territory between the Jehlum and the Indus.

From stray references in the literature of the period, we also find that certain trees and plants, like the *Pipal* and the *Tulsi*, were also worshipped. Besides, the Vaishnavites worshipped Krishna and Ram, whereas the Saivites worshipped Lord Siva and His symbols.

#### Books for Further Study

1. Munshi Sujan Rai : *Khulasat-ut-Twarikh*
2. Gyan Singh : *Panth Parkash*
3. Blochman : *Ain-i-Akbari*
4. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
5. Saran : *Provincial Government of the Mughals*
6. M. Akbar : *The Punjab under the Mughals*
7. Ibbetson : *A glossary of Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and N.W.F.P., Volume I*
8. Beni Prashad : *Jahangir*
9. Smith V. A. : *Akbar*
10. Saksena : *Shah Jahan*
11. Temple R.C. : *Legends of the Punjab*
12. Cunningham : *A History of the Sikhs*
13. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : *A Short History of the Sikhs*
14. Macauliffe : *The Sikh Religion*
15. Indubhushan Banerjee : *Evolution of Khalsa, Volume I and Volume II*
16. B.S. Nijjar : *Punjab under the Great Mughals*



## CHAPTER XIII

### Career and Exploits of Banda

#### I

#### Early Career of Banda

Banda Bahadur was originally a Dogra Rajput.<sup>1</sup> He was born on October 27, 1670, at Rajori, a village in the Poonch District of western Kashmir. His father, Ram Dev, was an ordinary ploughman. Banda was known as Lachhman Dass in childhood. He was very fond of hunting and once he shot a pregnant doe which expired in a few minutes along with the young ones in her womb. The suffering of the doe and her young ones touched the heart of Lachhman Dass so much that he made up his mind to renounce the world and lead an ascetic's life. He, therefore, left his home and became a *bairagi*. He took a new name—Madho Dass. He joined a party of *sadhus* and wandered from place to place. During those wanderings, he met at Nasik one *yogi*, Aughar Nath, from whom he learnt the science of yoga and incantation. From Nasik, he moved to Nander, where he built a monastery of his own and began to lead a settled life. It was there that he used to practise tricks of magic on everyone who visited him.

Early Career of  
Banda

In 1708, Guru Gobind Singh, who was then accompanying the Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah, in his Deccan campaigns stopped at Nander for some time. One day, he went to the monastery of *Bairagi* Madho Dass and the following conversation took place between the two<sup>2</sup> :

Guru Gobind  
Singh and Banda

Madho Dass : 'Who are you ?'

Guru Gobind Singh : 'He whom you know.'

Madho Dass : 'Whom do I know ?'

Guru Gobind Singh : 'Think it over.'

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1. Cunningham says that he was originally a native of the Deccan. But modern research has proved beyond doubt that he was a Dogra of Kashmir.

2. This account is taken from Ahmad Shah Butalia's *Zikar-i-Gurun wa Ibtada-i-Singhan wa Mazhab-i-Eshan* and is reproduced from Ganda Singh's *Banda Bahadur*, p. 14



**Madho Dass :** 'So, you are Guru Gobind Singh.'

**Guru Gobind Singh :** 'Yes.'

**Madho Dass :** What have you come here for ?

**Guru Gobind Singh :** 'I have come to make you my disciple.'

**Madho Dass :** 'I submit ; I am your *Banda* (slave).'

Thus, Madho Dass Bairagi became 'Banda' or slave of the Guru and he is commonly known now by this name. Guru Gobind Singh instructed Banda in the tenets of his religion and, consequently, Banda was administered the *pahaul* and became a full-fledged Sikh of the Guru. He was given a Sikh name, Gurbakhash Singh, but as 'Banda' was the epithet used by him at his first meeting with Guru Gobind Singh, he preferred to be called so even subsequently.

**Banda Becomes  
a 'Singh'**

**Banda Instructed  
to Wreak Ven-  
geance on the  
Enemies of the  
Khalsa**

The devotion and dexterity of Banda soon inspired the Guru with confidence and one day the latter called him and said, "You have to wreak vengeance on the enemies of the Khalsa." Taking a sword, and five arrows from his quiver, and delivering them to Banda, the Guru added, "Do not approach a woman if you are my disciple, and keep this sword and five arrows with you. So long as you follow my instructions, no harm will come to you; if you disregard them, your courage shall depart and you shall lose your life."<sup>1</sup> It is said that the Guru also gave him a drum and a banner. Banda was also given letters (*Hukamnamas*) in the name of the Sikhs of the Punjab, asking them to rally under his banner and avenge the death of the Guru's father and his innocent children.

The Guru, however, did not send Banda alone to the Punjab. Rather, he asked his twenty-five chosen disciples to accompany him to the North and guide and assist him. Among them were Baba Binod Singh and Kahan Singh, the descendants of Guru Angad, and Baj Singh, a descendant of Guru Amar Das. Thus, Banda,

**Banda Set Out  
towards the  
Punjab**

1. G. C. Narang in his *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 55, says that the Guru on that occasion enjoined on Banda the following five commandments :

- (1) Do not approach a woman. Lead a life of chastity and celibacy.
- (2) Speak the truth and act the truth.
- (3) Regard yourself as a servant of the Khalsa.
- (4) Do not try to found any sect of your own.
- (5) Do not let victories turn your head.

with a few Sikh zealots, set out for the Punjab to fight against the Mughal tyranny, in general and to punish Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sirhind, in particular. It was Wazir Khan, who had bricked up the Guru's two young children alive and who had harassed the Guru at Chamkaur and in the jungles of Machhiwara. It is believed by the Sikhs that the Pathan who stabbed Guru Gobind Singh later at Nander was in the pay of Wazir Khan.

## II

### Military Exploits of Banda

As soon as Banda entered the Punjab territory, the Sikhs from all quarters flocked under his banner. Chaudhri Ram Singh and Tiloka, of the Phool Family, sent a large number of soldiers to join Banda's forces. Ali Singh, Mali Singh and other Sikhs of Salaudi also volunteered themselves to fight in the name and the cause of their Guru. Bhai Fateh Singh and Bhai Rupa were other well-known Sikh Sardars who joined hands with Banda to wreak vengeance on the enemies of the Khalsa. A large number of irregulars also joined the Khalsa Army in the hope of getting a rich booty. Thus, Banda, before he actually started to fight against the Muslims, had got a large following to the tune of several thousand armed men.

The first town in the Punjab which Banda looted was Kaithal. After that, he looted and plundered Samana, the native place of Jalal-ud-din, the executioner of Guru Tegh Bahadur. It is said that Banda put as many as 10,000 Muslims to death in Samana. From there, he proceeded towards Sadhaura. On the way, he overran all the important towns, namely, Ghuram, Thaska, Shahbad, Ambala and Kapuri.

But it was at Sadhaura that the first closely contested battle between the Muslims and Banda's followers was fought. Sadhaura was at that time held by Usman Khan, a great tyrant. Banda and his men gave Usman a crushing defeat and thousands of Muslims were murdered in cold blood. The place where that great slaughter took place is still known by the name of "Qatlgarhi". From Sadhaura, the Sikhs proceeded to Mukhlispur which was easily occupied. The Fort of Mukhlispur was repaired and was renamed 'Lohgarh'.

**Conquest of  
Sadhaura and  
Mukhlispur  
"Qatlgarhi"**

But the most daring exploit of Banda was the capture and sack of Sirhind. In the eyes of the Sikhs, Sirhind was the most accursed place. It was here that Guru Gobind Singh's two sons were brutally murdered. It was here that the Guru's mother had given up her life.

Conquest of Sirhind (12th May, 1710)

And it was also the Governor of Sirhind who had harassed the Guru at Chamkaur and in the forest of Machhiwara. Thus, when Banda marched upon Sirhind, thousands of devoted Sikhs from Malwa and Majha came and joined him in that holy war against the greatest enemy of their Guru. Wazir Khan, with all his forces, advanced to meet that new danger. The battle was fought on the plain of *Chappar-Chirti*, ten miles from the City of Sirhind. The most notable event of the battle was the hand-to-hand fight between Banda's lieutenant, Baj Singh, and Wazir Khan. Baj Singh succeeded in wounding Wazir Khan, but before the latter could retaliate, Fateh Singh, another chosen Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh, attacked the Muslim *Faujdar* and cut him to pieces. With the death of Wazir Khan, general confusion followed among the Muslims and thousands of them were put to the sword. The Sikhs then proceeded to Sirhind which was captured after a noble resistance. A Hindu official of Wazir Khan, Sucha Nanak, who had instigated the Governor to put Guru Gobind Singh's son to death, was put under arrest. An iron ring was put in his nose

and he was paraded in the city. At evening, he was given a shoebeating until he died. After that, the whole town was subjected to pillage and indiscriminate massacre. The war cry of the Sikhs was "Darshan". This work of carnage was carried out in a most diabolical spirit. Latif says that Banda and his Sikhs spared the Muslim inhabitants of the town without any regard to sex. They "butchered, bayoneted, strangled, hanged, shot, hacked to pieces and burnt alive every Mohammedan in the place." He says that "the mosques were polluted and pulled down and the mullas, mchils and hafizes were subjected to the greatest indignities and misdeeds." The corpse of Wazir Khan "was hung on a tree and left to the tender mercies of the crows and vultures."

It is said that after that came the Mata Sundari, one of the wives of Guru Gobind Singh, who came to Banda, asking him that as he had achieved his mission, he should not be punished of Wazir

Khan), he should arrest his career of carnage and spoil. But Banda was determined to turn out the Mughals and establish a Sikh rule in the Punjab. So, before proceeding further with his conquests, he tried to consolidate his position in the territories which he had already conquered.

Thus, after the conquest and sack of Sirhind, Banda made the following arrangements for the administration of his newly conquered territory. He appointed Baj Singh to govern Sirhind. He appointed Ali Singh of Salaudi as his deputy. The government of the territory of Samana and its adjoining areas was entrusted to Fateh Singh of Bhai-ki-tamili. Baba Binod Singh and Ram Singh were sent to take charge of Thanesar. All the Muslim officials of the twenty-eight *parganas* of Sirhind were replaced by Hindus or Sikhs. Banda himself retired to Mukhlispur, a small hill fort near Sadhaura. This Mukhlispur, as already mentioned, was given a new name Lohgarh (Iron Castle) and became the headquarters of Banda. It was there that he struck coins in the name of the Guru (1710), the inscription on which was "By the grace of the True Lord is struck the coin in the true words. The word of Nanak is the granter of all boons and the victory is of Guru Gobind Singh, the King of Kings". He also introduced a new seal, bearing the following inscription. "The kettle and the sword (symbol of charity and power), victory and ready patronage have been obtained from Guru Nanak—Gobind Singh".

One of the greatest achievements of Banda's administration was the abolition of the *Zamindari* system and the way he abolished it is described thus<sup>1</sup>.

**Abolition of Zamindari System** Once, a number of peasants from the villages in the neighbourhood of Sadhaura came to Banda and complained of the tyranny of the *zamindars*. Instead of listening to their petition, the Sikh chief ordered that fire be opened on them. They were taken aback and asked the reason for that strange treatment. Replying to them, Banda said, "You deserve no better treatment. You are thousands in number and yet you cannot help yourselves against the *zamindars*. The Khalsa should redress his own wrongs." That implied that the peasants were indirectly urged by Banda not to obey the landlords

1. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh : *A Short History of the Sikhs*, pp. 87-88



and, thus, in course of time, the Sikh peasants became independent of the landlords.

Banda's victories led to the rising of the Sikhs in other parts of the country also. Disturbances broke out in Saharanpur, Behat and Jalalabad. Banda's men took full advantage of those disturbances. They waged ruthless wars against the Muslim *Faujdar*s of those areas and in a short time made themselves masters of all the territory between the Sutlej and the Jumna.

But the most serious rising of the Sikhs occurred in the Jullundur Doab, where the Sikhs rose as one man to throw off the yoke of the Mughals. Shams Khan, the *Faujdar* of Jullundur, sent a large force against the Sikhs. An indecisive battle was fought at Rahon, and the Muslims failed to assert their authority.

The Sikhs of Majha and Riarki also rose in revolt. They captured Amritsar, Kasur, Batala, Kalanaur and even Pathankot. Encouraged by those victories, they even attacked Lahore. So great was the awe of the Sikhs that the Lahore Governor, Sayyed Aslam Khan, lost nerve. At that hour, the Muslim population took up the lead. They organized the defence of Lahore. But, despite all their efforts, the Sikhs inflicted a crushing defeat on them and plundered the city. They (the Sikhs), however, did not occupy Lahore.

The Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah, could no longer tolerate that state of affairs in the frontier province of his Empire. So he hastened to the Punjab to crush the Sikhs. He ordered all the Muslim *Faujdar*s and *Nazims* of northern India to take a concerted action against the Sikhs. He developed such an aversion to the Sikhs that he issued an order that all Khatri and Jats in his Army, at the Court and in public offices should shave off their beards lest there should be any Sikhs disguised among them. It is said that as a result of that order, a great many of them had to submit to what they considered the disgrace of being shaved, and for a few days, the barbers were very busy. Some men of name and position committed suicide to save the honour of their beards.

Consequently, a very large Muslim force, about sixty thousand in number, was sent under Amin Khan against Banda. The Sikhs, in the beginning, avoided a pitched battle; but ultimately, Banda and his men were besieged in Lohgarh. The Sikhs offered a tough resistance but when the situation grew desperate, they, under their leader, Banda, succeeded in breaking through the besieging lines and took shelter in the hills of Nahan. That event happened in December 1710. The Mughals were not aware of Banda's escape. Therefore when, after the capture of the fort, they began a search for the Sikh leader, they found, to their great disappointment, that "the hawk had flown."

Banda did not remain quiet in his retreat in the northern hills. There, he started a campaign against those hill chiefs who had troubled Guru Gobind Singh. He also married the daughter of the Raja of Chamba and sent a *Hukamnama* to the Sikhs to organize themselves and continue their holy struggle against the Mughals. Thus, Bahadur Shah failed to crush the uprising of Banda.

Bahadur Shah died in February 1712. After his death, a civil war started among his sons. Banda immediately took advantage of that strife and rushed upon Lohgarh and Sadhaura. He not only recaptured them without any difficulty, but also was able to retain them for nearly two long years. Ultimately, however, the superior army of the new Emperor, Farrukh Siyar, dislodged him from there and compelled him to flee back to the Shivalik Hills, from where he started his raids upon Batala and Kalanaur and gained some brilliant victories. Seeing that, the emperor determined to extirpate the Sikhs and so chose one of his best generals, Abdul Samad Khan, surnamed 'Diler Jang,' a Turani noble, for the command of the Punjab. He was instructed by Farrukh Siyar to wage a ruthless war against Banda and his followers.

### III

#### Arrest and Execution of Banda

In the beginning of 1715, Abdul Samad Khan made big preparations and marched against Banda. A decisive battle was fought at Gurdas Nangal, a small village, about four miles from the present City of Gurdaspur. The Sikhs, despite the improvised defence of their small

**Battle of Gurdas Nangal : 1715**

fortress or 'Garhi' (Haveli of Bhai Duni Chand), fought against the Mughals for months, till not a grain of corn was left with them. It is said that during that siege, the Sikhs were reduced to extremely sore straits. For several months, the besieged Sikhs had to live on grass, leaves, the bark of trees and powdered bones of slaughtered animals. It was really amazing to give so terrible a resistance to the great military force of the Mughal Empire for nearly eight months. At last, the patience of the Sikhs was exhausted and they surrendered. But they fought so gallantly that even the author of *Ibratnama*, an eye-witness, had to write :

"The brave and daring deeds of the infernal Sikhs were amazing...Such was the terror of these people and the fear of the sorceries of their chief that the Commanders of the royal army prayed that God might so ordain things that Banda should see his safety in flight from the "Garhi."

The Sikhs might not have suffered a defeat, if Banda Singh had not fallen out with one of his generals, Binod Singh. Their differences demoralized the Sikhs and they surrendered. It is said that about 8000 Sikhs died in that battle and the remaining were taken prisoners. Banda was also arrested, but so great was the dread of the man that he was chained and kept in an iron cage. A Mughal officer with a dagger was also tied to him and he was to plunge his dagger into Banda in case he attempted to escape.

The heads of the Sikhs who were killed in the battle of Gurdas Nangal were mounted on pikes and along with Banda and other Sikh prisoners were taken to Lahore and paraded in the streets. From there, the prisoners were sent in chains to Delhi where they reached on February 29, 1716. At Delhi also, Banda and 780 of his followers were again paraded in the city. "At the head of the procession were carried two thousand heads of Sikhs, raised on bamboo poles, their long hair streaming in the wind."<sup>1</sup> Along with them, the body of a cat was hung at the end of the pole to show that every living creature, even down to the quadrupeds, like cats, found in the enclosure of Gurdas Nangal, had been destroyed. Then came Banda Singh, seated in an iron cage placed on the back of an elephant, and dressed, out of mockery, in a gold-embroidered red turban and a heavy robe of scarlet brocade

1. Ganda Singh : *Banda Singh Bahadur*, pp. 218-19

worked in with pomegranate flowers in gold. Behind him stood, clad in chain armour, with a drawn sword in hand, one of the Turani officers of Mohammad Amin Khan. After his elephant, came the other Sikh prisoners, tied two and two, on saddleless camels. Upon their heads were placed high fantastic fool's caps of ridiculous shape, made of sheep-skin and adorned with glass beads."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, for the Muslim population of Delhi, it was a great *tamasha* (fun). The author of *Ibratnama* says, "Such a crowd in the bazaars and lanes had rarely been seen. The Mussalmans could hardly contain themselves with joy. But the unfortunate Sikhs, who had been reduced to that condition, were quite happy and contented with their lot. Not the slightest sign of dejection or humiliation was visible on their faces. In fact, most of them, as they passed along on their camels, seemed to be happy and cheerful, merrily singing their sacred hymns. If anyone from the lane called out to them that their own excesses had brought them where they were, they quickly retorted that it had been so decreed by the Almighty, and that their capture and misfortune were in accordance with His will. And if anyone said, "Now you will be killed", they shouted, "Do kill us. When were we afraid of death? Had we been afraid, how could we have fought so many battles with you? It was merely through want and hunger that we fell into your hands; otherwise you know already what deeds of bravery we are capable of."<sup>2</sup>

After that great humiliation, Banda and his close friends and associates, 26 in number, were handed over to Mir Atish to be imprisoned in the fort. Banda Singh's family, including his wife and child, were sent to the harem to be confined there and the remaining Sikhs were handed over to Kotwal Sarbrah Khan for execution.

It was six days after that procession that the followers of Banda began to be executed. Before a Sikh was brought to the *Chabutra* of the Kotwali for execution, he was promised to be set free if he abjured his faith. But the Sikhs were so staunch in their faith that none of them wavered. Rather, they vied with one another for precedence

Execution & the  
Sikhs

1. Ganda Singh : *Banda Singh Bahadur*, p. 218-19

2. See Harisi : *Ibratnamas*, as quoted in Ganda Singh's *Banda Bahadur*, p. 221



in death. While the executions were in progress, the mother of one of the condemned prisoners represented to the Emperor that her young son was not originally a Sikh but only a prisoner in the hands of the Sikhs and, therefore, was being innocently punished. Emperor Farrukh Siyar was moved and, consequently, ordered that the young man be set free. The woman approached the Kotwal with the royal *Farman* but when the order was communicated to the boy, so goes the story, he refused to leave his companions and told the Kotwal, "My mother is telling a lie. I am with my heart and soul a Sikh. Send me quickly after my companions." Saying those words, he ran back to the *Chabutra* of the Kotwali and was duly executed.

All contemporaneous writers, Indian and English, praise 'the wonderful patience and resolution with which those men underwent their fate.' They never showed any fear of death; rather they would wrangle with one another for getting precedence in death. On their lips were the words "O *Muktidata* (Giver of Deliverance), kill me first." It is said that the executions lasted one week and, on the average, one hundred Sikhs were executed every day.

Banda's execution, however, was delayed. It was probably due to the fact that the Mughal officers wanted to obtain information from him where he had kept his treasures. Banda had collected a rich booty during the last five years and the avaricious Emperor and his officers wanted to know where he had hidden those riches. But, despite their best efforts, they could not get any clue from the Sikh leader. At last, on June 19, 1716, orders for his execution were passed. He was again paraded in the streets of the city and then offered the usual choice between Islam and death. Banda, of course, gladly accepted the latter.

The execution of Banda, according to the author of *Siyar-ul-Mutaakhrin*, began in the following manner. Banda's four-year-old son, Ajai, was placed in his lap and the father was asked to cut his throat. Banda refused. The executioners then cut the child to pieces and flung his quivering heart into Banda's face. thereafter, they tore the flesh of Banda with red-hot pincers. Banda, however, remained calm up to the last. The remaining followers of Banda were executed the next day.

Execution of  
Banda

## IV

**Character and Estimate of Banda**

**Character and Estimate of Banda**

To his co-religionists, the Sikhs, Banda appears to be a great champion of faith. They think that he was chosen by their great Guru to wipe out the iniquities and to avenge the execution of his father and innocent children. To the contemporaneous Muslim writers, he appeared 'as one of the most sanguinary of monsters' or 'ruthless blood-suckers,' who had nothing to commend his memory to posterity. But to an impartial student of history, he is one of the bravest and most enterprising generals who, like other Hindu warriors of his times, such as Dhanaji, Jaidev and Santaji Ghorpade, dealt severe blows to the prestige and stability of the Mughal Empire and who instilled among his followers the ever-burning spirit of hatred against the alien rule.

**Banda, neither a Monster nor a Ruthless Blood-sucker, but an Able and Enterprising Leader who Led the Sikhs in the Struggle for Independence**

Banda Singh Bahadur was not a free-booter or a blood-thirsty tyrant like Chingez and Attila. He was essentially a selfless man and in his boyhood had even left his home because he could not stand the sight of the death of a doe and its young ones. For several decades he had led the life of abstinence and self-control. He was a strict vegetarian and it is a pity that a person who regarded even meat-eating as a sin, should be styled as a monster or a blood-sucker. He was commissioned by his Guru to avenge the death of the innocent Indians who had suffered innumerable hardships at the hands of the power-drunk Mughals. So, when Banda conquered and sacked Sirhind or looted and plundered Samana, Kaithal or Sadhaura, he was in reality giving training to his followers and instilling confidence in them for the struggle of emancipation which he had started in the Punjab. And in preparing his people for that struggle, he could not show any consideration to those mild methods which the Muslim contemporaries expected of the followers of Nanak or Guru Gobind Singh. Banda never claimed to be a spiritual successor of Guru Gobind Singh nor did the Sikhs at any time take him to be their religious head. On the other hand, Guru Gobind Singh, immediately after baptizing him, nominated him as his political successor and instructed him to avenge the execution of his father and sons and to lead and

organize the Sikhs to fight against the tyranny of the Mughals. That mission, he carried out successfully. Thus, Banda's name shall remain writ large in the roll of immortality on account of his great intrepidity and self-sacrifice in leading and organizing the Sikhs against the Mughal tyrants of the Punjab. Sir G.C. Narang says about him : "Guru Gobind Singh had diverted the attention of his followers from the plough to the sword. He had sown the seed; Banda reaped the harvest. The Guru had enumerated principles; Banda carried them into practice. Gobind Singh had destroyed the awe inspired by Mughal depotism; Banda completely broke the charm of its invincibility."<sup>1</sup>

**A Man of Faith** Banda was a man of faith and even when he was brought to the scaffold, he never thought that any injustice had been done him. He said that if his Guru's will had been otherwise, no one could have dared to bring him there. He attributed all his success to the grace of Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Nanak, as is amply born out by the inscriptions on the coins which he struck and the seals he issued. In the former, he says, "Victory to Guru Gobind Singh, King of Kings" and in the latter, he mentions that 'The kettle, sword, victory and unhesitating patronage are obtained from Guru Nanak, Gobind Singh.'

**Had Great Organising Capacity** Banda was not only an intrepid warrior but also a great organizer. The way he consolidated his possessions after the capture and sack of Sirhind bears testimony to his organizing ability. His abolition of the *Zamindari* system and his encouragement to the peasants to have the maximum from their lands speak very highly of his statesmanship.

**Occupies a High Place in the History of the Punjab** Thus, although Banda met with a tragic end and for a few years after his death the Sikhs were hunted down, yet he occupies a very high place in the history of the Punjab. Dr Ganda Singh says that "it was through him that the path of the conquest and freedom was discovered by the people of the Punjab. He was the first man to deal a severe blow at the intolerant rule of the Mughals in the Punjab and to break the first sod in the conquest of that province by the Sikhs." Though independence came to the

1. G. C. Narang.: *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 185

Punjab much later, yet it was Banda who first taught the Punjabis to fight, conquer, and establish their independent rule in the Punjab after centuries of subjection. It was because of the exploits of Banda that 'a will was created in the ordinary masses of the Punjab to resist tyranny and to live and die for a national cause.' And it was the result of this will that the Hindus and the Sikhs together drove out the Afghans and the Mughals out of their homeland and, thus, achieved freedom which they had come to regard as their birth-right.

Some of the contemporaneous historians and even some modern writers hold the view that Banda founded a new sect and that he used to style himself as a Guru. Banda **Bandai Sikhs** certainly introduced certain innovations which did not find much favour in the eyes of the orthodoxy. The common mode of salutation ordained by Guru Gobind Singh was 'Wah guru ji ki Fateh' but Banda asked his followers to use a new salutation in its place, viz. 'Fateh Dharam' or 'Fateh Darshan' (i.e. Victory to faith! Victory to the sect!). The livery of Guru Gobind Singh's followers was generally of blue colour; but Banda insisted on his followers to wear a red livery. Not only these things, he insisted that his followers must not take meat, whereas meat-eating was common among the Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh. Thus, on account of those innovations, the Sikhs were split up into two groups—the 'Tat Khalsa' who were led by Mata Sundari, Baba Binod Singh and Mani Singh, and, the 'Bandai Sikhs' as followers of Banda—who accepted the innovations of Banda. Those differences, of course, were not serious, but still the ranks of the Sikhs on account of those differences remained divided for some time. At last in 1721, through the casting of lots, the differences were resolved and most of the 'Bandai' Sikhs agreed to lead the life of orthodox Sikhs.

Banda had struggled hard to inspire his men to fight against the Mughal tyranny, but in the end, he failed. Success is never a good measure to judge the greatness of a man. Greatness lies in the struggle. If Banda failed, it was not due to his personal faults, but on account of circumstances over which he had little or no control. In the first place, he was arrayed against the whole might of the Mughal Empire. Farrukh Siyar was determined to exterminate the Sikhs, and Banda had but only a

**Causes of the Failure of Banda to Establish Sikh Rule in the Punjab**



small following. Secondly, Banda had been taken unawares. Bhai Duni Chand's Haveli was not a regular fort, and defence could not last long. Moreover, Banda's revolt was the first attempt of its kind and that is why some of his followers over-estimated the strength of the enemy and were consequently not so bold and ruthless as they grew later. Besides, the differences between the 'Tat-Khalsa' and the 'Bandai Sikhs' also weakened Banda's position. Baha Binod Singh left Banda at the most inopportune time when the siege of Gurdas Nangal was going on. These were the circumstances which ultimately led to the failure of Banda.

#### **Books for Further Study**

- I. Cunningham : *History of the Sikhs*
- II. Ganda Singh : *Banda Singh Bahadur*
- III. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
- IV. G.C. Narang : *Transformation of Sikhism*
- V. Gyan Singh : *Panth Prakash*
- VI. Sohan Lal Suri : *Umdat-ul-Twarikh*
- VII. Ganda Singh & Teja Singh ; *Short History of Sikhs*
- VIII. Ahmad Shah Butalia : *Zikr-i-Guruan wa Ibtida-i-Singhan  
wa Muzhab-i-Eshan*
- IX. Karam Singh : *Banda Bahadur*

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE PERSECUTION OF THE SIKHS

**Abdul Samad Khan and Zakriya Khan**

**"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church"**

**The First Ten years after Banda's Execution**

The execution of Banda Singh Bahadur dealt a great blow to the power of the Sikhs in the Punjab. The Mughal Emperor Farrukh Siyar, after crushing Banda and his followers, decided to exterminate the Sikhs. He issued an edict<sup>1</sup> directing the State officials that every Sikh falling into their hands should, on refusal to embrace Islam, be put to death. Forster says that "such was the keen spirit that animated the persecution, such was the success of their exertions that the name of a Sicque (Sikh) no longer existed in the Mughal dominions."

**Farrukh Siyar's  
Determination  
to Exterminate  
Sikhs**

On the other hand, the Sikhs, after the death of Banda, were left without any leader. They had no one to guide them. Most of the weak-minded Sikhs, on account of the fear of persecution, ceased to keep long hair and began to style themselves as 'Khulasas' or 'Sahaj-dharis' or slow-adopters. The strong among them, however, kept long hair but even they were not strong enough to resist the mighty Mughal Empire. They were divided into two distinct groups—the 'Tat Khalsa, and the 'Bandai' Khalsa. The Tat Khalsa did not hold Banda as their spiritual guide. They worshipped the 'Adi Granth' as their Guru. They repudiated the salutation and war-cry of Banda 'Fateh Dharm' or 'Fateh Darshan' and insisted that they should greet one another with 'Wah Guruji ka Khalsa, Wah Guruji ki Fateh' (i.e. the Khalsa belongs to the Lord and the victory too belongs to Him), the salutation introduced by Guru Gobind Singh. The 'Tat Khalsa', unlike the Bandai Khalsa, did not adopt the red dress, but continued using the blue dress introduced by Guru Gobind Singh. Besides, the 'Tat Khalsa' adopted the meat-diet which the Bandais considered taboo. Thus,

**Sikhs Divided :  
the 'Sahajdharis'  
the 'Bandais' and  
the 'Tat Khalsa'**

1. Forster : *Journey from Bengal to England*, Volume I, pp. 312-13

the disunity in the ranks of the Sikhs coupled with the edict of Farrukh Siyar to exterminate them, greatly demoralized them and, according to Forster, a number of Sikhs even cut off their long hair for fear of persecution and began to lead a peaceful life. But still there were many who did not submit to that sacrilege and could not enjoy the elementary rights of citizenship in any town or village of the Punjab. They were, consequently, forced to take shelter in hills and forests. Thus, for some time, i.e. from 1716 to 1720, there was a complete black-out of the activities of the Sikhs in the history of the Punjab.

In course of time, and on account of the fact that the Sikhs had taken shelter in the hills and the forests, the Mughal officials in the Punjab grew slack in the enforcement of Farrukh Siyar's edict. Besides, the Mughal Governor or the *Subedar* of the Punjab, Abdul Samad Khan,

The Sikhs Set  
Their House in  
Order

then, an old man, did not care to persecute the Sikhs strictly according to his edict, after the death of Farrukh Siyar in 1710. The result was that the Sikhs gradually came back from their hill and jungle retreats and again settled in towns and villages. By 1720, i.e. within four years after the death of Banda, they again grew so bold that they began to meet in large numbers at Amritsar to celebrate the Diwali and the Baisakhi with their usual fervour and enthusiasm. Though they met in large numbers at the time of the great Hindu festivals, yet they could not chalk out a common programme of action for their safety and survival. At last in 1721, Mata Sundri, the widow of Guru Gobind Singh, commissioned Bhai Mani Singh, Head-*granthi* of the Darbar Sahib or High Priest of the Golden Temple, Amritsar, to settle the differences of the two sects of the Sikhs—the 'Tat Khalsas' and the 'Bondai Sikhs'. Consequently, he called the leaders of both the Sikh parties—Baba Kahan Singh, son of Baba Binod Singh, representing the Tat Khalsa, and Mahant Singh of Khem Karan, representing the 'Bandais'. It was agreed by them that their respective claims be decided by the casting of lots. Accordingly, two slips of paper were taken. On one was written 'Wah Guru Ji Ki Fateh' and on the other 'Fateh Darshan'. It was settled beforehand that both the slips would be submerged in the water of the sacred tank and if the slip bearing 'Wah Guru Ji Ki Fateh' would rise first to the surface, then the 'Bandai' Sikhs would join the Khalsa. On the other hand, if the slip bearing 'Fateh Darshan' would rise to the surface first, then the 'Tat Khalsa' would join the

ranks of the Bandai Sikhs. Thus, both the slips were immersed in water at Har Ki Pauri and to the good fortune of the 'Tat Khalsa', their slip (Wah Guruji Ki Fateh) came to the surface first. That was a great victory for the Tat Khalsa. But some of the Bandais, even after that incident, refused to join the ranks of the Khalsa, saying that the lots were not cast in a fair manner. At last, it was decided that a duel be fought in front of the Akal Takht between the representatives of the two groups. In that duel, too, the Tat Khalsa came out victorious. But even after the duel, some Bandais held out. They were driven out of the temple by force and it was in that scuffle that the leader of the Bandai Sikhs, Mahant Singh, was killed. The unfavourable lot, the defeat in the duel and the death of their leader, at last demoralized the 'Bandais' and most of them joined the ranks of the Tat Khalsa. That union was solemnized by a simple ceremony. The vegetarian Bandais took a little of soup from cooked pork.

Once the Sikhs were united, they again began to assert themselves even at the point of the swords. They took the offensive against those Hindu and Muslim officials who would not let them live a decent life and even inflicted a crushing defeat on a strong Muslim force under Aslam Khan sent by the Lahore Governor to chastise them. At last, the Mughal government at Delhi transferred Abdul Samad Khan from Lahore to Multan. His son Khan Bahadur Zakriya Khan was given the charge of the Lahore Province with specific instructions to crush the Sikhs.

## II

### **Zakriya Khan 1726—1745**

Khan Bahadur Zakriya Khan took charge of the Punjab in 1726. He adopted very stern measures against the Sikhs. He organized punitive parties to hunt out the Sikhs from their retreats in hills and jungles. Prices were fixed on their heads. The Sikhs were arrested wholesale and brought to a public place called 'Nakhas' or market place outside the Delhi Gate in Lahore. There, they were tortured and beheaded. This place is now known as Shahidganj.

With such a Governor in the Punjab, the Sikhs again could not lead a peaceful life. They once more retired to the hills and



the forests and lived a life of great hardship. It was during that period that they coined strange names for eatables and movable property, so that the enemy should not understand their real position. But the Sikhs, in spite of all that persecution, did not lose heart. They took pleasure in their miserable plight, for they were men of faith. They thought that their sufferings were due to the will of the Guru and would soon end. They were sure that one day the Khalsa would rule. Thus, though they lived as outlaws, they were "merry outlaws." Even during that period, they would often come to the plains and collect food and provisions from the Hindus and the Sikhs who sympathized with their cause.

That period of hardship for the Sikhs closes with the incident of Tara Singh of Van. Bhai Tara Singh quarrelled with a Hindu official, Sahib Rai of Nowshera Dalla, and the latter in anger said 'You would see my scissors tresspassing into your beard and long hair.' A Sikh, for whom the hair are so sacred, could not tolerate that threat. Tara Singh, therefore, took away one of the mares of Sahib Rai, sold it and credited the money to the Guru's 'Langar.' Sahib Rai, thereupon, asked Jaffar Beg, the *Faujdar* of Patti, to help him in punishing the Sikh. At once a force of more than one hundred soldiers was sent against Tara Singh, but it was defeated. Even the nephew of the *Faujdar* was killed in the skirmish. That defeat enraged Jaffar who asked the Governor of Lahore, Zakriya Khan, to send a larger force. At last, a big force of more than 2,000 men was sent against Tara Singh. With only 22 Sikhs, Tara Singh fought against that force for a whole night and when the sun rose the Mughals were surprised to find that they had not been able to overpower even 22 men. They made one great attack and all the twenty-two, including Tara Singh, were killed.

The bravery of those 22 Sikhs, fighting against a force of more than two thousand, touched the hearts of the Sikhs who, out of fear, had gone to the jungles for safety. They then realized that if they could fight with the same bravery and courage as Tara Singh of Van had done, they could easily put an end to the tyranny of the Mughals in the Punjab. So, they came out of their retreats and began to harass the Mughal officials. Their common tactics of attack were to fall upon the officials at the time they were removing the treasures from one place to another. The result of

**Tara Singh  
Van's Gallant  
Defence**

**Sikhs Return to  
the Plains and  
again Start the  
Struggle of Inde-  
pendence**

those surprise attacks was that Zakriya Khan sought the help of the Muslim population of the Punjab in crushing the Sikhs. He appealed to their fanaticism and in a short time the flower of the entire Muslim Punjab assembled at Lahore and raised the 'Haidari' flag. The Balochis and the Sayids, the Mughals and the Pathans, the Bhattis and the Jats, the Ranghars and the Rajputs and even the *Telis*, the *Mochis*, the *Dooms*, the *Jullahas*, the *Gujjars*, the *Dogras*, the *Sainis* and the *Arrains*, all joined in that 'Jehad' or holy war against the Sikhs. That force which

**The 'Haidari' Flag**

numbered several lakhs set out under the command of Mir Innayat Ullah to extirpate the bearded ruffians, as the Sikhs were then contemptuously called.

When the Sikhs learnt about that raising of the 'Haidari' flag, they first retired to their distant retreats and then after a few days took the Muslims unaware and wrought immense havoc among them. They also took away large quantities of ammunition and a great number of horses. Thus, about six to seven thousand Sikhs defeated lakhs of Muslims. But the latter soon recovered and pursued the Sikhs, though in vain. Meanwhile, the Sikhs organized themselves into bands. They would conceal themselves during the day and during the night would come and plunder the Muslims. At last, one day the Sikhs fell upon the 'Ghazis' who had raised the Haidari flag in the neighbourhood of Bhilowai and completely annihilated them. Bhagat Lakshman Singh describes the last scene of the career of the Haidari flag in the following words :

"Some Turks were cut down while fleeing, some struck against the trees...some broke their limbs, some lost their eyes. In rage, the standard-bearer tore down the Haidari flag and set it on fire."

When the policy of persecution failed, Zakriya Khan tried to placate the Sikhs. In 1733, he sent a message through a Sikh contractor, Subeg Singh, to the Sikhs who were

**Zakriya Khan  
Tries to Placate  
the Sikhs (1733)**

meeting at Akal Takht, asking them that their leader should accept the title of 'Nawab' from the

Mughal government and also receive a *Jagir* of the value of one lakh of rupees a year. At first, the Sikhs rejected the offer, but after the matter had been discussed thread-bare, they agreed that the title of 'Nawab' and the *jagir* should be given

to Kapur Singh Faizulpuria who was at that time fanning the Sikh gathering.

Thus, after more than two decades, an understanding was arrived at between the Mughal government of the Punjab and the Sikhs. Zakriya Khan had hoped that with that understanding the Sikh would give up the life of loot and plunder and would take to the plough.

The Sikh  
'Jathas', and the  
Dal Khalsa

But he was mistaken. The Sikhs, by that time had become essentially soldiers, and when they got breathing-space and money they reorganized themselves into '*Jathas*' or bands. All the *Jathas* constituted the "Dal Khalsa". There were two main divisions of this 'Dal'—the 'Buddha Dal' and the 'Taruna Dal'. The Buddha Dal was the army of the elders, most of whom were those Sikhs who had seen the days of Guru Gobind Singh. The 'Taruna Dal' or the army of the young, was divided into five *jathas* or bands, each under a separate *Sardar*. Each of those five *jathas* consisted of 1300 to 2000 men and had its own drum and banner. Each had separate headquarters at Amritsar. Those five centres of the Taruna Dal were : (1) Ramsar, (2) Bibeksar (3) Lachhmansar, (4) Kaulsar and (5) Santokhsar. Both the Buddha and the Taruna Dals worked together against the common enemy under the leadership of Nawab Kapur Singh who was held in great esteem by all Sikhs. Later on, in 1748 the command of the Dal was given to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia.

Those bands of the Dal Khalsa and, particularly of the Taruna Dal, continued to be a source of great trouble to the Mughals in the Punjab throughout the thirties. They overran the whole of the Bari Doab and some of them even crossed the Satluj and assisted Ala Singh to establish a small State in the 'Malwa' region of the Punjab. Khan Bahadur Zakriya Khan sent a force under

Attacks of the  
Sikh Bands

Diwan Lakhpat Rai against those bands of the Dal Khalsa. Lakhpat Rai succeeded in defeating them. He also took possession of Amritsar, set up a military post there and issued instructions to the Mughal officials in the neighbourhood of Amritsar to haul up the Sikhs if they gathered at Amritsar to celebrate any fair or festival. But, despite those harsh measures of Diwan Lakhpat Rai, the Sikh bands remained unsubdued.

One of the important incidents connected with the harsh policy of Zakriya Khan and Diwan Lakhpat Rai was the execution of Bhai Mani Singh. Bhai Mani Singh was born at Alipur near Multan in 1644. At a young age of seven, he became a disciple of the Guru. After the ninth Guru's death, Mata Gujri, the mother of Guru Gobind Singh, looked upon Mani Singh as her own child. During Guru Gobind Singh's time, he was mostly at his durbar. After Guru Gobind Singh, he was regarded as the spiritual leader of the Sikhs. He was the high priest of the Harmandar at Amritsar and used to preach the Word of God to the people every day. "His learning and high scholarship, his masterly exposition of the scriptures and his saintly life and general disposition commanded unstinted admiration and drew immense congregations."<sup>1</sup> He also tried to revise the *Adi Granth* by separating the words from one another and by punctuating the various phrases and sentences, to abandon that work on account of the opposition of his but he had co-religionists. It was Bhai Mani Singh who had settled the dispute between the Bandai Khalsa and the Tat Khalsa.

When Zakriya Khan and Diwan Lakhpat Rai set up a military post at Amritsar and banned the meetings of the Sikhs in the Harmandar, Mani Singh protested against such a policy. In 1733, he hit upon a plan. He approached Zakriya Khan with the request that he would pay Rs. 10,000 out of the offerings of the Sikhs if he were permitted to celebrate the Dewali festival at Amritsar. The greedy Governor gave the necessary permission but just on the eve of the fair when the Sikhs had not yet made their offerings at the temple, Zakriya took them unawares and, consequently, the *mela* or fair broke up. Bhai Mani Singh was not able to collect the money which he had promised to pay to the Lahore Governor. But Zakriya insisted that the contract money should be immediately paid. Bhai Mani Singh pleaded that it was because of the Mughal Governor's action that he had not been able to collect the money and, consequently, it was no longer binding on him to pay the stipulated amount. Khan Bahadur, then, got Bhai Mani Singh arrested and offered him the usual choice between Islam or execution. On his refusal to swerve from his faith, he was cut to pieces limb by limb (1734).

1. Bhagat Lakshman Singh : *Sikh Martyrs*, p. 118



Some of the close associates of Bhai Mani Singh, such as Diwan Singh, also suffered the same fate.

The execution of Bhai Mani Singh aroused deep feelings of resentment and revenge in the minds of the Sikhs and they began to await an opportunity for vengeance. They got that chance in 1739, when Nadir Shah invaded the Punjab. While Nadir Shah was retreating from Delhi, the Sikhs bands fell upon the rear of Nadir's Army and replenished their resources by relieving it of a part of its loot from the treasures of the Imperial Capital. Nadir Shah was deeply impressed by the boldness of the Sikhs and it was he who warned Zakriya and said, "Take care, the day is not distant when these rebels will take possession of the country."

**Sikhs Rob  
Nadir's Rear :  
1739**

The remarks of Nadir Shah made Zakriya think seriously of the Sikh danger and he decided to take very stern measures against them. He attacked and razed to the ground their fort, Dallewal, which they had recently built. He organized moving columns and set them in motion in pursuit of the Sikhs. Besides, Zakriya Khan issued a regular schedule of *inams* (prizes) for those who assisted in the work of stamping out the Sikh movement. He who cut off the hair of a Sikh was awarded blankets and beddings ; he who supplied information about the whereabouts of the Sikhs got ten rupees ; and he who caught or killed a Sikh, received fifty rupees.<sup>1</sup>

**Zakriya's Mea-  
sures to Destroy  
Sikhs Root and  
Branch**

Thus, the Sikhs were hunted like wild beasts and most of them were obliged to quit the plains of the Punjab and retire to old resorts in the hills and the jungles. But still, that policy of persecution did not damp the spirits of the devoted followers of the Gurus and they most fearlessly faced death while fighting such an organized tyranny of the enemies of their religion. One Mehtab Singh came to know that Chaudhri Massa Ranghar had turned the central temple of Amritsar into a stable and a nautch-house. He could not tolerate that sacrilege. He left his home for Amritsar and did not take rest till he had cut off Massa's head. Later on, he was arrested and executed.

**The Sikhs Mar-  
tyrs: (i) Mehtab  
Singh**

1. H. R. Gupta : *A History of the Sikhs*, Volume 1, pp. 9-10

Similarly, one Bota Singh Sandhu showed uncommon courage in defying the Mughal power. He set up a post near Sarai Nur-ud-din on the Grand Trunk Road between Lahore and Amritsar and began to collect a toll at the rate of one anna per cart and one pice per donkey-load.<sup>1</sup> Zakriya Khan could not tolerate that bold act for long. He, therefore, sent a large force against Bota Singh. But the brave Sikh with his few companions did not surrender. Rather, he gave his life fighting.

(ii) Bota Singh  
 Another notable execution of the period was that of Bhai Taru Singh. His only fault was that he was a Sikh. He was handed over by the Narayani leader Harbhagat of Jandiala to Zakriya Khan for punishment. He was offered the usual choice of Islam or death. The brave Sikh accepted the latter. Consequently, he was brought to the *Nakhas* or *Shahidganj* where his scalp was seraped off. Taru Singh bore all that brutal punishment bravely and continued reciting the *Japji*.

(iv) Haqiqat, Rai 1742  
 It was also at about the same time that the execution of Haqiqat Rai took place. Haqiqat Rai was the only son of Bhag Mal Puri, a Khatri of Sialkot. His mother's name was Gauran. He was a Nanak-Panthi. While still a boy, he had married a Sikh girl, the daughter of one Kishan Singh, of Batala. Thus, though Haqiqat was not yet baptized a Khalsa, it is "admitted on all hands that in religious zeal and devoutness and in regard for the honour of his creed and country, he was second to none of the professed baptized Sikhs of his time."

One day, his Muslim teacher uttered a few disrespectful words about Hindu gods. That disrespect made the young Haqiqat furious and he retaliated by passing a few remarks against Prophet Mohammad and Bibi Fatima. He was, thereupon, arrested and later on taken to Lahore for trial. Then, there started a great stir in the Punjab over the arrest of a young Hindu and some of the leading Hindu officials even waited on the Lahore Governor for the release of Haqiqat. But all their efforts failed. A mock trial was held and the death sentence was pronounced. The saintly boy was then chained to a pillar and caned till he bled and lost all consciousness.

1. Teja Singh Ganda Singh : *A Short History of Sikhs*, Vol. I, p. 128

After that torture, he was beheaded and his body was taken to a solitary place near Shah Bilawal (Lahore) where it was cremated.

It is said that the whole non-Muslim population of the Punjab wept over the martyrdom of Haqiqat Rai. His relatives and, particularly his father-in-law, S. Kishan Singh Uppal, approached the Khalsa to wreak vengeance on the Muslim tyrant. Thereupon, within a short time, the Khalsa made a surprise attack on Sialkot and slew all those *Qazis* and *Mullahs* who had a hand in the execution of Haqiqat Rai.

### III

**Yahiya Khan**

**1745-1747**

#### **The Small Ghalughara (1746)**

In 1745, Khan Bahadur Zakriya Khan died and was succeeded by his son Yahiya Khan. He was in no way better than his father and continued the persecution of the Sikhs. The most important event of his period is the carnage or *Ghalughara* in which thousands of Sikhs were put to the sword.

**Yahiya Khan :**  
**1745**

The Sikhs, as we have already mentioned, had divided themselves into bands. Those bands used to come out of their retreats to loot the Government treasuries and plunder rich Muslim officials in order to replenish their resources. In 1746, a number of such Sikh bands, on their way to Eminabad, where they were going to visit the Sikh temple of Rohri Sahib, took away a few sheep and goats of the residents of Gondlanwala. Jaspat Rai, the then *Faujdar* of that place asked the Sikhs to return the goats to their owners and leave Eminabad. The Sikhs refused to listen to the *Faujdar*. Consequently, he led a force against them, but the Sikhs gave him a tough fight. During the course of action, Jaspat Rai was killed.

**Sikhs Plunder**  
**Gondlanwala :**  
**1756**

**Jaspat Rai,**  
**Killed**

Jaspat Rai was the brother of Diwan Lakhpat Rai, the Finance Minister of the Lahore Governor. When Lakhpat Rai heard of the murder of his brother, he swore to wreak vengeance on the Sikhs. He went to the Nawab and throwing his turban at his feet said that he would retie it on his head only when he had

**Diwan Lakh-**  
**pat Rai Swears**  
**to Wreak Venge-**  
**ance on the Sikhs**

erased the name of the Sikhs from the Punjab. Yahiya was already planning to crush the power of the Sikhs and, so he gave full powers to Diwan Lakhpat Rai to destroy the Khalsa root and branch.

Diwan Lakhpat Rai first passed a number of measures against the Sikhs. Thereafter, no one could utter the name of the Guru.

**The First Ghalughara : 1746** Even the word 'gur' (jaggery) was not to be used and, in its place, people were to use the word 'rori.'

No one was to utter the word *Granth* and the word *Pothi* was to be used instead. The copies of the *Holy Granth* were collected and thrown into rivers. The Tank of Amritsar was filled up with earth. All the Sikhs inhabiting Lahore were arrested and handed over to sweepers for execution. Then, a large force was collected and Yahiya and Lakhpat personally marched against the Sikhs. The latter were overtaken in the marshes of Kahnuwan where a number of them were killed. But it was near the Basoli hills (between Pathankot and Dalhousi) that the Sikhs were brought to bay and they suffered very heavy losses. Those who tried to escape were drowned in the Ravi which was in flood.

In that bloody campaign which is generally styled as the first or small 'Ghalughara', about 7000 Sikhs were killed and about 3000 were captured. Those Sikh prisoners were brought to Lahore and beheaded at the *Nakhas* or *Shahidganj*.

**Civil War between Shah Nawaz and Yahiya and Sikhs Get Respite. Lakhpat Rai's End** But Lakhpat Rai was not destined to enjoy his triumph for long. Towards the close of 1746, Yahiya's younger brother, Shah Nawaz, revolted and defeated Yahiya. Shah Nawaz threw Lakhpat Rai into prison and in his place appointed Kaura Mal his Diwan. That civil war between Shan Nawaz and Yahiya Khan gave the Sikhs the much-needed respite and so, in a short time, they recovered their strength.

### Books for Further Study

1. H.R. Gupta : *Studies in Later Mughal History of the Punjab*
2. Bhagat Lakshman Singh : *Sikh Martyrs*
3. J. N. Sarkar : *Fall of the Mughal Empire*



4. **Cunningham : *History of Sikhs***
5. **Latif : *History of the Punjab***
6. **Gyan Singh : *Panth Prakash***
7. **Teja Singh & Ganda Singh : *A Short History of the Sikhs***
8. **Payane ; *Short History of the Sikhs.***



## CHAPTER XV

### The Afghan Invasions and The Rise of the Sikh Power In the Punjab 1747-1767

#### I

#### Civil War in the Punjab and Early Afghan Invasions

In 1746-47, there started a civil war among the sons of Zakriya Khan in the Punjab. That strife eventually resulted in the victory of Shah Nawaz Khan. Shah Nawaz, thus, became the Governor of the Punjab. But he did not enjoy the support of the Delhi Court where the influence of Wazir Qamar-ud-din was predominant. Qamar-ud-din, the grand Wazir, wanted that the Punjab should be restored to Yahiya Khan, the old Governor, whom Shah Nawaz had dispossessed. Consequently, when Shah Nawaz wrote to the Delhi Emperor for recognizing him as the lawful Governor of Lahore, the Emperor (Muhammad Shah) and the Wazir refused to confirm him in the viceroyalty of the Punjab. Thus, Shah Nawaz felt insecure about his position and, consequently, sought the support of another powerful noble of the Punjab, Adina Beg; and, through him, opened negotiations with Ahmad Shah Abdali, the new ruler of Afghanistan. Shah Nawaz promised to Ahmad Shah that he would recognize the latter as his suzerain provided the Wazirship of Delhi and the Governorship of the Punjab<sup>1</sup> were given to him. He also agreed to embrace the Shia faith.

Ahmad Shah readily accepted the invitation of Shah Nawaz and, consequently, left Peshawar in December 1747 to invade India. No resistance was offered to him till he reached Shahdara near Lahore. But at Shahdara, when Ahmad Shah sent a message to Shah Nawaz to join him, the latter refused. The reason was that in the intervening period between Shah Nawaz's invitation and Ahmad Shah's invasion, Wazir Qamar-ud-din had won him over to his side. Thus, Shah Nawaz, instead of joining him, offered resistance to the invader at Lahore but as no adequate

Shah Nawaz :  
1746—48

Ahmad Shah  
Abdali's First In-  
vasion : 1748

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1. "Crown to Ahmad Shah and Wazirship to Shah Nawaz"

reinforcement came to him from Delhi, he was defeated. Ahmad Shah occupied Lahore. From Lahore, he advanced to Delhi. The Emperor, thereupon, sent a large force under Wazir Qamar-ud-din to check the advance of Ahmad Shah. A bloody battle was fought at Manupur on 11th March, 1748, in which Wazir Qamar-ud-din was killed. But his son, Muin-ul-Mulk, popularly known as Mir Mannu, defeated Ahmad Shah who fled back to Afghanistan.

After that victory, Mir Mannu marched on Lahore to take up his new post as Governor of the Punjab, to which post he had been appointed by the Delhi Emperor. On reaching Lahore, Mir Mannu found absolute anarchy in the Punjab. In order to restore order, he reformed the whole administration. He confirmed Kaura Mal as the Diwan of Lahore and appointed Adina Beg as the *Faujdar* of the Jullundur Doab. He also sent moving columns against the Sikhs who during the period of anarchy (1746-48) had greatly increased their power. He also issued instructions to Adina Beg to suppress the Sikhs in the area under his charge.

But while Mannu was busy in settling the affairs of the Punjab, Ahmad Shah, the Durrani Chief, entered the Punjab for the second time, nine months after the first invasion, i.e. in December 1748. The Lahore Governor appealed to the Delhi Emperor for help, but Wazir Safdar Jang who was a personal enemy of Mannu, did not send any reinforcement. Mir Mannu, relying on his own resources, marched against Ahmad Shah. A battle was fought at Sodara in which Mannu was defeated. Through the mediation of a holy man, Maulvi Abdullah, Mannu agreed to cede four 'Mahals'—Sialkot, Pasrur, Gujrat and Aurangabad—to Ahmad Shah. Those Mahals, however, were to continue to be governed by Mannu's men, but he was to pay 14 lakhs of rupees as their annual revenue. Thus, Ahmad Shah, in the words of Sir J.N. Sarkar, "got the first slice of India proper."

One of the major reasons for the defeat of Mir Mannu in the war against Ahmad Shah was the hostility of the Delhi Wazir Safdar Jang. He was the 'malignant star in the Delhi firmament' and Sir J.N. Sarkar, writing about him, says, 'Devoid of far-sighted statesmanship, patriotism, or devotion to the throne, he was destined to ruin the Mughal Empire by pursuing a policy of blind self-aggrandizement. His one thought was how to secure himself in the Delhi government by raising round himself a ring of



dependable clients at court and in the province.”<sup>1</sup> He was deadly against the old Turki party and the rallying centre of this Turki party was Mir Mannu. It was why he did not send any help to him when Ahmad Shah invaded India and he was happy to learn that Mannu had been defeated at Sodara.

Safdar Jang did not stop there. He encouraged Nasir Khan, ex-governor of Kabul, and Shah Nawaz Khan to create troubles for Mannu in the Punjab. But Mannu, with the help of his able Diwan, Kaura Mal, overcame all those troubles.

## II

### The Sikhs Acquire Power

The Sikhs took full advantage of the anarchy and confusion that prevailed in Delhi and Lahore from 1746 to 1749. They found that the Punjab was not having a stable government. The Delhi Government was not extending full co-operation to the Lahore government and, besides, the Afghan invasion had further weakened the position of the Lahore Government. The Sikhs, therefore, began to set their house in order. They re-formed the Dal Khalsa which was first founded in 1734. The command of all the Sikh bands was given to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia on the Baisakhi Day in 1748. The Sikhs even constructed a mud fort near Ramsar and styled it Ram Rauni. They also began to visit Amritsar frequently to celebrate the Dussehra, Holi and Baisakhi festivals. Some of the Sikh bands under the leadership of Hari Singh and Jhanda Singh, both of the Bhangi Misl, even established their authority over certain villages in the Bari Doab ; and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Jassa Singh Ichogilia (Ramgarhia) took possession of a large part of the Jullundur Doab.

This growing power of the Sikhs alarmed Mannu. He sent punitive expeditions in pursuit of them. He also revived the policy of persecution which had been followed by Zakriya Khan and Yahiya Khan. It was announced that whosoever would bring a Sikh's head to him, he would receive ten rupees as a reward, and whosoever captured a horse from a Sikh could keep it as his own.

1. Sarkar, J. N. : *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Volume I, p. 237

Towards the end of 1748, Mir Mannu and Adina Beg (the *Faujdar* of the Jullundur Doab) decided to take extensive measures to crush the Sikhs. They marched on Amritsar and besieged the new Sikh Fort Ram Rauni. The Sikhs offered a gallant defence, but after some time they felt that it was difficult to prolong the struggle against such heavy odds. At that critical juncture, Jassa Singh Ichogilia (Ramgarhia), who was then in the service of Adina Beg, went over to the Sikhs. That event greatly heartened the garrison and the Sikhs resumed the fight with greater enthusiasm. About the same time, news reached Mir Mannu that Ahmad Shah had entered the Punjab. Mir Mannu's Diwan, Kaura Mal, who had much sympathy for the Sikhs, then made a request to Mannu, saying, "The Sikhs always cause confusion and disorder. It will be advisable if you reach a settlement with these people. They will not then create disturbances." It is said that Adina Beg did not subscribe to that view and wanted to continue the war against the Sikhs. But Mannu, acting on the advice of Kaura Mal, made peace with the Sikhs and granted them one-fourth of the revenue of the Parganah of Patti.<sup>1</sup>

### III

#### Conquest of the Punjab by Ahmad Shah Abdali, and Mir Mannu's Regime

In 1751, Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India for the third time with a much larger army than ever before. He wrote to Mir Mannu to send the arrears of the tribute for the  
Third Invasion of  
Ahmad Shah :  
1751-52
 four 'Mahals'. But the Lahore Governor sent only a part of the tribute to him and explained to him that he had not enough money to pay the arrears in full. Ahmad Shah, then, advanced towards Lahore and took Mannu by surprise.

For a few months, Abdali stayed near Lahore. He had not enough artillery to take a decisive action. On the other hand, Mir Mannu appealed to the Delhi Emperor for help and, consequently, delayed the action with a view to getting reinforcements from him. During that period, the Afghans revaged the neighbouring territory, with the result that no lamp was lighted in any house up to dis-

1. H. R. Gupta : *Studies in Later Mughal History of the Punjab*, p. 75

tances three 'marches' apart and grain became exceedingly dear. In March 1752, fighting began between the two opposing armies and in the action that followed, Kaura Mal, the Diwan of Lahore, was killed and Mannu was taken prisoner.

When Mir Mannu was brought before Ahmad Shah, the latter asked him, "What would you have done to me if you had captured me?" Mannu replied, "I would have cut your head off and sent it to my master, the Emperor." The Abdali then put him another question, "Now that you had refused so long to submit, how should I deal with you?" Mannu, thereupon, gave a bold answer : "If you are a shopkeeper, sell me (for a ransom), if you are a butcher, kill me; but if you are a *Padshah*, then grant me your grace and pardon." That reply pleased Ahmad Shah and, consequently, he pardoned him. He gave him the title of 'Farzand Khan Bahadur Rustam-i-Hind' and also put his own turban on his head. Thereafter, a treaty was signed between the two. By it, the Provinces of Lahore and Multan were ceded to the Afghan king. But Ahmad Shah left them to be governed by Mir Mannu in the same way as before without disturbing the administrative arrangements.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the Punjab passed into the hands of the Afghans and Mir Mannu was appointed the first Afghan Governor to rule the Punjab on behalf of Ahmad Shah.

Feeling secure against any intrusion from Kabul or Delhi, Mir Mannu turned his attention towards the Sikhs, who during Mannu-Abdali war, had returned to their old ways and had begun to make a bid for independence. First of all, he withdrew the *jagir* which he had granted to the Sikhs in the 1749.<sup>2</sup> He then sent a large force under Sadiq Beg and Adina Beg to crush the Sikhs. Those Muslim generals took the Sikhs unawares near Makhwal (Anandpur) and put a large number of them to the sword. But after that victory, Adina Beg made a secret understanding with them in the hope of utilizing their services for his personal advancement at some later date. But still Adina Beg, in order to keep Mir Mannu in good humour, would send from time to time 40 to 50 Sikh captives from the Jullundur Doab to Lahore to show that he was straining every nerve to crush the Sikhs.

1. Sarkar : *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Volume I, pp. 245-46

2. Teja Singh, Ganda Singh : *A Short History of Sikhs*, p. 147

The severest action against the Sikhs, however, was taken by Mir Mannu himself. He made a sudden attack on them near Batala and in the struggle that followed, about nine hundred of them were killed. Mir Mannu also sent moving columns in all direc-

tions against the Sikhs. The Sikhs who were, thus, captured were brought to Lahore, where they were hammered to death with wooden clubs. Mir Mannu sometimes himself rode out for the hunt of the Sikhs. Those who fell into his hands were brought to Lahore to be executed in the most brutal manner. But, despite those measures, Mannu failed to stamp out the Sikh danger, as is borne out by a popular Panjabi saying :

“Mannu is our sickle and we are a crop for him to mow;  
The more he cuts us, the more we grow.” (English translation)

Thus, the policy of persecution failed to have any effect upon the Sikhs and they remained unsubdued. H. R. Gupta says :

“Mannu’s efforts availed him nothing. The Sikhs never gave him peace. The harder he grew, the bolder they became.”<sup>1</sup> There were several reasons that, despite serious efforts of Mannu, the Sikhs remained uncrushed. Firstly, by the time Mannu started operations against them, the Sikhs had organized themselves into a compact body, the Dal Khalsa. That organization stood them in good stead during dangerous days. Secondly, as H. R. Gupta says, “The common danger and strong religious feelings kept them under discipline and made every Sikh obey his leader in order to work for the cause of the Panth.” Moreover, common grievances, common sufferings, a common faith and a common purpose had created feelings of brotherhood and love among the members of the Dal Khalsa.

Thirdly, the success of the Sikhs attracted the Punjab peasants to embrace Sikhism, because by doing so they would be free from the obligation of paying revenue to the State and, in addition, would get the privileges of power and plunder. Thus, that example of the Sikhs was followed by their non-Sikh brother peasants who were also tempted to grow long hair, take *pahaul*, shout ‘Akal’, ‘Akal’ and consequently enlisted themselves in the bands

1. H.R. Gupta : *A History of the Sikhs*, Volume I, p. 82



of the Khalsa.

Fourthly, Diwan Kaura Mal, whom Mir Mannu greatly trusted, was a Sahajdhari Sikh.<sup>1</sup> And whenever he found an opportunity to save the Sikhs, he always availed himself of it. Similarly, Adina Beg, through whom Mir Mannu wanted to destroy the Sikh power, was not sincere in his efforts to crush the Sikhs. Malcolm says that artful Adina considered the Sikhs in no other light "than as a means of his personal advancement. He was careful not to reduce them altogether, but after defeating them in an action entered into secret understandings with them."

#### IV

#### **Mir Mannu's Death and the Period of Confusion : Mughlani Begum**

Mir Mannu died suddenly in November 1753. With his death started the period of great confusion in the Punjab. For the next five years, there was no stable government and the political history of the Punjab during that period is nothing but the study of revolts and counter-revolts. When the Delhi Emperor, Ahmad Shah, came to know of the death of Mannu, he appointed his own infant son, Mahmud, the Governor of the Punjab and the son of Mannu, Muhammad Amin, as his Deputy. But that 'puppet play' lasted for a few days only. Ahmad Shah Abdali was the real master of the Punjab, and not Ahamad Shah of Delhi. He appointed Mohammad Amin, the two-year-old son of Mannu, as the Viceroy of the Punjab,<sup>2</sup> but the real power in the Punjab was exercised by the regent mother, the masterful widow of Mannu, Mughlani Begum.

Mughlani Begum's real name was Suriya Begum or Murad Begum. She was a woman of loose character and was guided by her eunuchs—Mian Khush Faham, Mian Arjumand and Mian Mahabata—who became her chief confidants in all affairs, great and small. Sir J. N. Sarkar says, "Her wilfulness and caprice discredited the administration, while her profligacy roused deep resentment and shame

1. Sikhs, because of the pro-Sikh policy of Kaura Mal, called him Mitha Mal. 'Kaura' means bitter and 'Mitha' means sweet.

2. Sarkar : *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Volume I, p. 249

among her military officers, who came from the same Central Asian stock as her husband and her father. Rebellion against such a degraded authority became a point of honour, no less than an object of personal ambition with her Turkish captains."<sup>1</sup> Most of the Punjab nobles felt that "their own rule would be worthier and more conducive to the safety and happiness of their retainers and subjects than the anarchy which prevailed in Lahore from Mughlani Begum's follies and vices."<sup>2</sup> Thus, those nobles began to entertain ideas of carving out independent principalities for themselves.

The first to make such a bold bid to carve out an independent principality for himself was Bhikhari Khan. He raised the standard of revolt, but the Begum succeeded in reducing his followers and putting him in confinement. Those events were followed by the revolts of Qasim Khan, Khwaja Mirza and Khwaja Abdullah. The last-named noble succeeded in capturing the Begum and interned her in her mother's house. He took the reins of the Government of Lahore in his own hands. Abdullah's rule did not last beyond six months. Mughlani Begum appealed to Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk at Delhi for help. Consequently, he marched on Lahore, but on the way, he commissioned Adina Beg to punish Abdullah. Thereupon, Adina Beg despatched his son, Sadiq Beg, with 10,000 soldiers to Lahore. On hearing the advance of such a large force, Khwaja Abdullah fled away to the Jammu hills and Mughlani Begum was restored to power.

But Mughlani failed to give an orderly administration to the Punjab and, consequently, the Delhi Wazir, after some time, again removed her from power and appointed Adina Beg Governor of Lahore and Multan. Adina then sent his Deputy, Jamil-ud-din, to Lahore. But Mughlani Begum did not submit to the high-handedness of the Delhi Wazir and, consequently, sent woeful letters to Ahmad Shah Abdali and his Deputy, Jahan Khan, appealing to them for help. The Durrani Chief was already much

**Mughlani's Imprisonment—Adina Appointed Governor of the Punjab**

1. Sarkar : *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Volume II, p. 37

2. She is stated to have open love relations with Ghazi Beg, Khan Bakhshi and the young lad, Miskin, a contemporary historian. See H. R. Gupta : *Studies in Later Mughal History of the Punjab*, p. 122

concerned about the affairs of the Punjab, as he considered the interference of the Delhi Wazir a direct challenge to his authority. The Punjab had been a part of his kingdom since April 1752; and, therefore, the interference of the Delhi Wazir implied the weakness of Ahmad Shah. Ultimately in 1756, Ahmad Shah invaded the

**Abdali's Fourth  
Invasion : 1756-57**

Punjab for the fourth time. No resistance was offered to him anywhere and he easily occupied Lahore and Delhi. It was felt at Delhi that he had come 'as a guest' of the Emperor. From Delhi, Ahmad Shah advanced to Mathura which was sacked and plundered. Thence, he marched on Agra and captured it. He wanted to advance and loot Bharatpur also, but on account of an outbreak of cholera in his camp, he had to return to Kabul. But before he left the Punjab, he appointed his son Timur Khan<sup>1</sup> its Viceroy and Jahan Khan was associated with him as his Deputy. He also appointed Najib-ud-daulah as his agent (*Mukhtiar*) in Delhi.

The main concern of Timur Khan and Jahan Khan was to restore law and order in the Punjab. Firstly, they were to deal with Mughlani Begum who felt that she had not been given her due. Secondly, they were to deal with the Sikhs who, during the period of confusion that followed the death of Mir Mannu, had greatly increased their power and had even carved out small independent principalities. Besides the Sikhs, the Afghans of Alawalpur, the Pathans of Kasur, the Rajputs of Talwan, Phagwara and Kapurthala and the Randhawas of Batala, as also the Bajwas of the Rachna Doab had all gained great power during the last three years of Mughlani's misrule.

**Timur and Jahan  
Khan in Suspense**

First of all, Timur Khan tried to deal with the Sikh menace. He sent a large force under Atai Khan and Jahan Khan to attack the Sikhs and crush their power. Atai Khan and Jahan Khan learnt that the Sikhs were shortly going to assemble at Amritsar. In the neighbourhood of Amritsar, at Gahrwal, a bloody battle was fought between the Afghans and the Sikhs, in which the latter suffered heavy losses. Their leader, Baba Dip Singh, was mortally wounded but that brave Sikh, supporting his wounded head, 'went on fighting until he fell dead in the precincts of the Har Mandar (Golden

**Defeat of Sikhs  
—Battle of  
Garhwal**

1. Timur Khan at that time was only 11 years old.

Temple) where a cenotaph stands in his honour. But, despite that defeat, the Sikhs remained uncrushed, as they were secretly in alliance with Adina Beg, the *Faujdar* of Jullundhur. Similarly, Timur Khan and Jahan Khan found that Mughlani Begum was secretly intriguing with Adina Beg; and, therefore, Timur Khan and Jahan Khan realized that so long as Adina Beg was not crushed, there could be no peace in the Punjab.

## V

**Adina Beg Khan**

Adina Beg, as we have already seen, played a dominant role in the politics of the Punjab in the eighteenth century. He was an Arain by caste, and was born at Sharaqpur, 18 miles from Lahore. His father's name was Channu, a man of humble means. Thus, though he belonged to a humble stock, yet he rose to eminence by dint of merit and hard work.

**Early Career of Adina Beg**

He started his career under Khan Bahadur Zakriya Khan, who had given him a petty job of a revenue officer in one of the *parganahs* of the Jullundhur Doab. But within a short time, he impressed the Lahore Governor with his ability and honesty so much that the latter appointed him the district officer of Sultanpur. After Nadir Shah's invasion, Zakriya Khan appointed him the *Faujdar* of the whole of the Jullundhur Doab and that office he held for nearly two decades. But during the period, Adina Beg had once to undergo an imprisonment for one year for his failure to pay his revenues to the Lahore Government.

**Adina Beg under Zakriya Khan**

After the death of Zakriya Khan, there started a civil war in the Punjab. Adina Beg took full advantage of it. In the civil war between Shah Nawaz and Yahiya, he was on the side of the

former. And it was Adina who had advised Shah Nawaz to invite Ahmad Shah Abdali. But later on when Shah Nawaz changed his mind, Adina too

**Adina Beg under Shah Nawaz and Mir Mannu**

followed Shah Nawaz's example. After Abdali's first invasion, Mir Muin-ul-Mulk or Mir Mannu took charge of the Punjab and on arrival at Lahore, he confirmed Adina as the *Faujdar* of the Jullundhur Doab. Mannu also commissioned Adina Beg to take stern measures against the Sikhs. Conse-



quently, Adina enlisted a number of Sikhs in his army, including Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, and then, with a large force, marched on Amritsar and besieged Ram Rauni. But there at the most critical time of the battle, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia went over to the Sikhs and, thus, saved them. Kaura Mal, the Diwan of Mir Mannu, also advised his master to raise the siege of Ram Rauni, and Mannu, despite Adina's advice to the contrary, left Amritsar without crushing the Sikhs.

When Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded the Punjab for the third time in 1751-52, Adina Beg joined Mir Mannu with his forces to fight the invader. But Adina and Diwan Kaura Mal did not see

**Rivalry between Kaura Mal and Adina Beg** eye to eye with each other and, consequently, their rivalry seriously reacted upon the operations. Some contemporaneous writers have even charged Adina Bag with shooting Kaura Mal from behind and, thus, have held him responsible for the defeat of Mannu in the third invasion of Ahmad Shah.

After the death of Mannu, Mughlani Begum became the real master of the Punjab. During the confusion and chaos that followed her assumption of power, Adina greatly increased his

**Abdali's Fourth Invasion** power and even asserted his independence both from the Delhi Empire and the Lahore Governor.

When Abdali invaded the Punjab for the fourth time, he fled away from Jullundhur and took refuge at Hansi. But after the return of Abdali to Kabul, his son Timur Shah again sent for Adina Beg and confirmed him in the *Faujdari* of Jullundhur. But Adina Beg agreed to accept that responsibility only on the condition that he might be exempted from attending his court at Lahore. Though Timur would not like to accept that condition,

**Timur and Adina** yet on account of political expediency, he granted Adina that great favour.

But after some time, Timur Khan and Adina again fell out. The latter made alliance with the Sikhs and also invited the Marathas to invade the Punjab and pointed out to them 'the rich harvest of spoil' which was within their easy

**Adina Makes Alliance with the Sikhs and Invites the Marathas** reach. The Maratha leaders, Malhar Rao and Raghunath Rao, therefore, invaded and overran the East Punjab. Adina Beg with his Sikh allies joined them and they marched on Lahore.

Timur Khan and his deputy Jahan Khan were given a convincing

defeat and, consequently, they fled to Kabul.

But the Marathas did not wish to remain in the Punjab; and, therefore, in April 1758, they gave the Province of Lahore to Adina Beg in return for an annual tribute of Rs. 75 lakhs. They also conferred on him the title of Nawab. Thus, Adina Beg attained his life's ambition—the *Subedari* of Lahore. But Adina Beg was not destined to enjoy that exalted position for long, as he died shortly afterwards on September 15, 1758.

**Adina's Death  
(1758)**

## VI

### **Ahmad Shah Abdali's Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Invasions : 1759-1775**

In 1759, Ahmad Shah again descended upon the plains of the Punjab to avenge the defeat of his son Timur Shah and to punish the Marathas and the Sikhs, who in alliance with Adina Beg, had recovered the Punjab from his deputies. The Maratha deputy governor of the Punjab, Sabaji, offered him no resistance, but the Sikhs harassed him here and there. After consolidating his position in the Punjab, Ahmad Shah marched on Delhi. Near Taraori, a Maratha force led by Dataji came to check Abdali's advance but suffered a crushing defeat. For about a year, the Afghan invader remained in the neighbourhood of Delhi, trying to amass a huge force to give a decisive battle to the Marathas. On the other hand, the Marathas under Sadashiv Bhau prepared themselves and marched against Ahmad Shah. The historic battle of Panipat—the Third Battle of Panipat—was fought on January 14, 1761. Both the Maratha and the Afghan armies were nearly equal in strength. The former had the advantage of having heavy artillery, whereas the latter excelled the former in cavalry and generalship. In the end, the Marathas were defeated and most of them were massacred.

**Fifth Invasion :  
Third battle of  
Panipat**

One of the consequences of that battle was that the struggle of the Marathas and the Afghans over the possession of the Punjab finally ended in the victory of the latter. That victory of the Afghans, however, did not place the Punjab in their hands. Rather, another power, the Sikhs, fired with the spirit of national fervour,

**Significance of  
Panipat in the  
Punjab History**

took advantage. In the battle of Panipat, Ahmad Shah had greatly exhausted his strength and had not been left with adequate resources to crush the Sikhs and so within a short time after the Marathas had been eliminated from the field of Punjab politics, the Sikhs, roused by their national feelings, succeeded in expelling the Afghans and establishing their sovereignty in the Land of the Five Rivers.

After the great victory of Panipat, when Ahmad Shah was returning to Kabul, the Sikh Dals harassed him on the way near the Beas and relieved him of a portion of his rich booty. Even about 2,000 Hindu women, who were being taken away as captives to Kabul, were snatched from the hands of the Afghans and, later on, restored to their families.

Before leaving the Punjab, the Abdali invader made the following administrative arrangements. He gave Multan to Sarbland Khan, Lahore to Khwaja Obed and Sirhind to Zain Khan. Those Governors were given strict instructions to crush the power of the Sikhs in the Punjab. But hardly had he crossed the Indus, when the moving bands of the Sikhs led by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Hari Singh Bhangi and Charat Singh began to roam the country all around. Most of the *Faujders* holding important positions in the towns were driven away. At last, Khwaja Obed felt obliged to take a very stern action against the Sikhs. In September 1761, he marched against Gujranwala with a large force numbering about 10,000. All the Sikh Sardars, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Hari Singh Bhangi and Jai Singh Kanhya, joined and gave a crushing defeat to Khwaja Obed.

After that splendid victory of Gujranwala, the Sikhs marched on Lahore and their leader, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, after a brief fighting, captured the capital city. Then he proclaimed himself king and assumed the title of 'Sultan-ul-Qaum'. He even struck coins bearing the inscription<sup>1</sup> "Deg, tegh, fatch nusrat bedarang, yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh." The Sikhs did not stop there. They even routed the Durrani *faujders* of the

1. H. R. Gupta says that the coins bore this inscription: "Sikka zad dar Jahan bafazal-i-Akal, Mulk-i-Ahmad grift Jassa Kalal"

Jullundur Doab, namely Saadat Khan and Sadiq Khan. In October 1761, the Sarbat Khalsa also decided to take action against the leader of Niranjani Sect, Akil Das of Jandiala, who was doing the work of a spy for Ahmad Shah. When Akil Das came to know of it, he invited Ahmad Shah to come and teach a lesson to the Sikhs.

In response to the invitation of the Niranjani leader and in order to crush the Sikhs, Ahmad Shah Abdali entered India for the sixth time. After restoring his authority in Lahore, he hurried to Jandiala. But there he came to know that the Sikhs had gone away towards Sirhind and were then near Malerkotla. The Afghan

**Sixth Invasion  
of the Abdali  
Invader**

invader did not waste time there. He at once proceeded towards Malerkotla and within less than two days covered nearly 150 miles and on the 5th of February, 1762, took the Sikhs unawares near the village of Kup, six miles north of Malerkotla. By a sudden attack, he killed a large number of them. The Sikhs were taken completely by surprise and their main body was separated from the baggage train which consisted of arms, ammunition and provisions and which was at the village of Garma, four miles from the main body. They, therefore, decided to join the baggage train and thence move to Barnala<sup>1</sup> where they hoped to get some help from Baba Ala Singh. Consequently, they "threw a strong cordon round the remnants of their women and children and moved on fighting and fought on moving." But hardly had they covered a

**The Second  
Ghalughara—5th  
Feb., 1762**

few miles when the Durrani forces overtook them and launched a fierce attack on them. The Sikhs also drew their swords and "cut, parried, slashed, hacked and hewed their enemies", but eventually they were over-powered. About 20,000 of them, including a large number of women and children, were killed. Only a few slipped away to Barnala. It was also in that battle that the Sikhs lost their famous volume of the *Adi Granth* which was completed by the Tenth Guru at Talwandi Sabo (Damdama Sahib). That carnage is known as "Wadda Ghalughara" or the second great holocaust in Sikh history.

After that great victory, Ahmad Shah marched to Barnala and after a brief fighting, captured it. Ala Singh, the Phulkian

1. Barnala is about 25 miles from Kup.



**Ahmad Shah  
Abdali and Ala  
Singh**

Chief of that place, submitted without offering any resistance. It is said that, in addition to 5 lakhs of rupees as tribute, he had to pay 1,25,000 rupees more to keep his long hair intact. Acting on the principle that "the hare of a country could be caught only by a dog of the same country", the Abdali invader confirmed Ala Singh in his original possessions in return for a handsome annual tribute. From Barnala, he proceeded to Sirhind and thence retraced his footsteps to Lahore.

On his way from Sirhind to Lahore, he sacked and plundered the inhabitants. At Amritsar, he destroyed the Hari Mandir, now called Golden Temple, and the sacred tank was

**Destroyed Hari  
Mandir, Amritsar**

filled up with the debris of the buildings and refuse. On March 3, 1762, he reached Lahore and erected pyramids of the skulls of the Sikhs. It is said that he also "caused the walls of the principal mosques which had been polluted by the Sicques to be washed with their blood."

From March to December, Abdali stayed in Lahore and during that period, he again led a few fiercest attacks on the

**Battle of Amrit-  
sar. Sikhs Re-  
trieve Their Pres-  
tige : Oct., 1762**

Sikhs; but he failed to crush their power. Rather, on 17th October, 1762, i. e. on the Diwali Day, about 60,000 Sikhs<sup>1</sup> assembled at Amritsar and took a vow to give a tough fight to Ahmad Shah in order to retrieve the honour and their national prestige and wreak vengeance on him. When Ahmad Shah was informed of that resolve, he refused to believe that the Sikhs whom he had given a crushing defeat at Kup, could have recovered so soon as to be able to take up arms against him while he was still in the Punjab. But when he became sure of the news he marched against them. Then followed the battle of Amritsar which lasted from morning till late at night and eventually the Shah had to make good his escape to Lahore under cover of darkness. Thus, Ahmad Shah, the victor of the Marathas, found himself helpless against the Sikhs.

In December 1762, some troubles started in Afghanistan and Ahmad Shah, therefore, felt obliged to attend to the affairs of

**Abdali Goes  
Back**

Kabul. But before he left Lahore, he made the following administrative arrangements. The Jullundhur Doab was given to Saadat Yar; Sar

1. H.R. Gupta : *A History of Sikhs*, Volume I, p. 185

Baland was confirmed in the governorship of Sirhind, and Lahore was given to Kabuli Mal. But no sooner did the Durrani king leave Lahore, than the Sikhs began to harass the nominees of Ahmad Shah in different parts of the Punjab. The *Buddha Dal* led by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia overran the Jullundhur Doab and the Malwa region of the Punjab. The *Taruna Dal* under Hari Singh Bhangi and Charat Singh Sukarachakya conquered most of the Rechna and the Bari Doabs and also overran the regions called Lamma and Nakka. These *Dals* did not stop there. With their combined resources and in alliance with Ala Singh, of Patiala, they fell upon Zain Khan of Sirhind in January 1764, and in the engagement killed him. They also plundered the people of Lahore.

When Ahmad Shah was informed of those Sikh eruptions in the Punjab and the failure of his agents to control them, he marched once more to invade India at the head of 18,000 soldiers. The Shah reached Lahore in October 1764.

**Seventh Invasion:**  
Oct. 1764

But to his surprise he found that the Sikhs had left the towns and the plains of the Punjab and fled away to their jungle and hill retreats. Ahmad Shah, however, marched on Amritsar, the headquarters of the Sikhs. But there he found only 30 Sikhs who were ready to lay down their lives for their Gurus. They fought the Ghazis in defence of their temple and all of them were killed. The invader then pulled down some buildings of the Sikhs and returned to Lahore.

Thereafter, Ahmad Shah held a council of his nobles and decided to search out the Sikhs and destroy them. A few expeditions were led against them in the Jullundur Doab and even in the Malwa region, but the intrepid invader found it impossible to crush them. He felt helpless when he saw the whole Punjab population up in arms and, consequently, returned to Kabul in 1765. The Sikhs, immediately after Ahmad Shah's departure, came to Amritsar to hold their annual Baisakhi Festival. They soon occupied Lahore and once again struck coins.

In 1766, Ahmad Shah again invaded the Punjab to reassert his authority there : but as in the previous invasion he was again baffled and harassed by the Sikhs. Thus, despite his best efforts, Ahmad Shah ultimately "failed in suppressing a military people who were closely knit together by ties of race and religion and who possessed invincible courage and

**Eighth Invasion:**  
1766-67

irresistible will.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, we find that from 1748 to 1766, the Punjab had become the cockpit of a struggle among four powers—the Marathas, the Afghans, the Sikhs and the Mughals. By 1761, the Marathas and the Mughals were eliminated from the contest ; and for the next five years, struggle continued only between the Afghans and the Sikhs. In the end, however, the latter “emerged triumphant from their deadly struggle of the past thirty years and the long-drawn-out agony of their subjection came to an end and the dream of their independence was realized.”<sup>2</sup>

**Causes of the Success of the Sikhs—H. R. Gupta's View**

Dr H. R. Gupta attributes the success of the Sikhs in thier struggle against the Afghans to two main reasons : One was the tenacity of purpose and the resourcefulness of mind which made the chiefs and troopers of that blood (Sikh) capable of protracted endurance and sustained enterprise in the face of difficulties and discouragements before which other Indians were apt to succumb with a feeling that destiny was against them. The other was that fighting is an art consisting of quick observation, skill and a combination of unselfishness and the habit of trusting one's comrades and leader, and such traits they (Sikhs) possessed in a remarkable degree.”<sup>3</sup>

To these causes may be added a few more. Firstly, Ahmad Shah did not want to settle in the Punjab. He was mainly interested in his trans-Indus possessions and on several occasions during his struggle with the Sikhs, he had to leave the Punjab suddenly due to some trouble in Kabul. Thus, his subordination of the conquest of the Punjab to his interests in Kabul was a very important factor responsible for his failure to crush the Sikhs effectively. Secondly, Adina Beg, the *Faujdar* of Jullundhur, played a double role for several years. Sometimes, he played the Afghans against the Sikhs and sometimes the Sikhs against the Afghans. Adina's duplicity went a long way in saving the Sikhs from annihilation. Thirdly, the Sikhs avoided pitched battles. Whenever Ahmad Shah came to crush them, they would conceal themselves in the Lakhi jungle or some hill retreats and

**Other Causes**

1. H.R. Gupta : *A History of the Sikhs*. Volume I, p. 271

2. *Ibid.*, p. 282

3. *Ibid.*, p. 281

from those places wage guerilla warfare. The Afghan invader became helpless against those guerilla tactics of the Sikhs. Besides, Ahmad Shah, after the battle of Panipat, had grown over-confident of his power and had underestimated of the Sikhs. That self-complacency was also greatly responsible for his failure.

The Afghan invasion profoundly influenced the history of the Punjab. First, Ahmad Shah Abdali, by defeating the Mughals and the Marathas, paved the way for the rise of the Sikh power in the Punjab. Secondly, the constant flow of the Afghan invasions greatly aggravated the chaotic condition of the Punjab. Whenever the Afghans marched against the Sikhs, they sacked and plundered the towns. The people lost all sense of security and they tried to spend everything lest Ahmad Shah and his followers should loot them. A Punjabi saying which was current in those days, reads like this :

**Effects of  
Abdali's Inva-  
sions on the  
Punjab History**

“Khādhā pītā lāhe dā  
Rahndā Ahmad Shāhe dā’,

i. e. “the only property that we hold is what we eat and drink; the rest belongs to Ahmad Shah.” Thirdly, those Afghan invasions increased the communal bitterness between the Hindus and the Muslims of the Punjab. During those wars, the leaders on both sides, the Afghans and the Sikhs, aroused the fanaticism of their co-religionists and, consequently, sometimes communal mass massacres were perpetrated. Those massacres widened the gulf between the two major communities inhabiting the Punjab. Fourthly, that Afghan-Sikh struggle which lasted nearly two decades, made the Punjabis bear arms to defend their hearths and homes. They, thus, developed martial habits and a gallant spirit.

### **Books For Further Study**

1. Sinha : *Rise of Sikh Power*
2. H. R. Gupta : *A History of the Sikhs*, Volume I
3. Teja Singh, Ganda Singh : *A Short History of the Sikhs*
4. Sarkar, J.N. : *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Volumes I and II
5. H.R. Gupta : *Studies in the Later Mughal History of the Punjab*



6. M. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
7. Cunningham : *History of Sikhs*
8. Gyan Singh : *Panth Prakash*
9. Rattan Singh Bhangu : *Prachin Panth Prakash*

## CHAPTER XVI

### The Sikh Misls

#### I

#### Origin of the Misls

We have already mentioned in the previous chapters how the Sikhs, in order to meet the danger of the Mughal persecutions and the Afghan invasions, were forced to organize themselves firstly into small military bands and then into the powerful Dal Khalsa. In the beginning, there were as many as sixty-five<sup>1</sup> such bands, each under a Sikh *Sardar*. At times, those bands pooled their resources and fought under a common leader, such as Nawab Kapur Singh, or Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, against the common enemies, the Mughals or the Afghans. The collective strength of those bands constituted the Dal Khalsa which was thoroughly organized in 1748. But in the course of the next two decades, those sixty-five bands were leagued together in eleven or twelve main divisions, each with a distinguishing title and banner, but varying in strength.<sup>2</sup> Those divisions, in course of time, began to be called 'Misls'; and from 1767 to 1799, the whole of the Punjab was held by those Misls. Thus, it must be remembered that those 'Misls' were not deliberately devised or knowingly adopted at one particular time but were, on the other hand, gradually evolved to meet certain exigencies of the time.

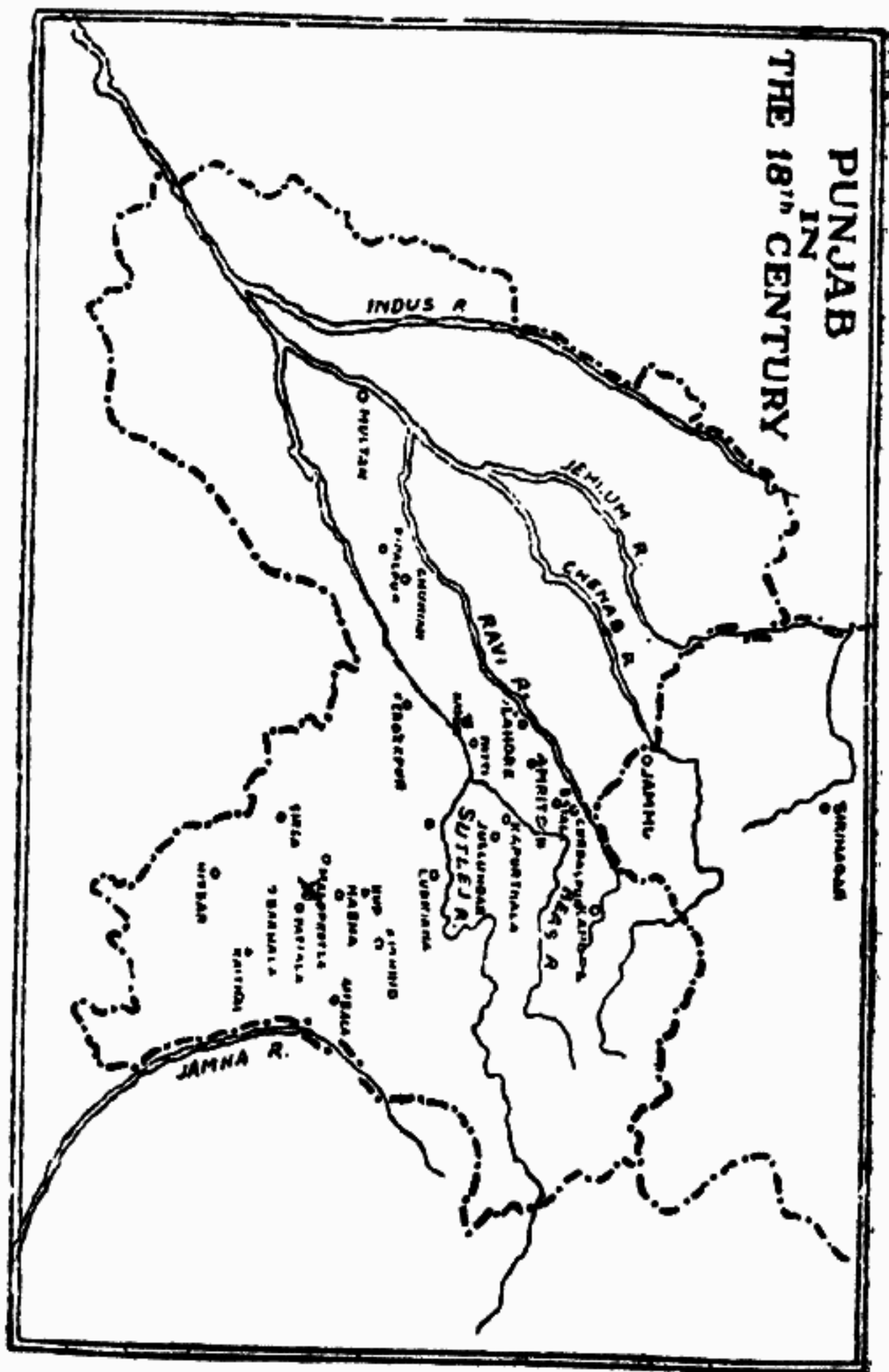
The word 'Misl' is an Arabic word which means 'equal' or 'alike'<sup>3</sup> and the dominant feature of those eleven or twelve Sikh *Jathas* or divisions was that the chief and the followers of a Misl considered themselves equal or alike to those of another.<sup>4</sup> Besides, according to the Sikh religion, all the Sikhs are absolutely equal and, hence, in times of peace and in all social matters all the

1. H.R. Gupta : *A History of Sikhs*, Vol. I, p. 49

2. *Ibid.*, p. 51

3. Cunningham : *History of Sikhs*, p. 106

4. Latiff : *History of Punjab*, p. 290. He says that the word 'Misl' implied similitude.



members of a particular Misl claimed complete equality with everyone, including their chief. Of course, the *Sardar* was obeyed only when there was war but there was no such obligation for the people to obey him beyond that emergency. Payne, therefore, says, "As membership in such a *Jatha* or group conferred political, religious and social equality on all its members, they began to be designated as 'Misls'.

These *Misls* or confederacies were, in popular estimation, twelve in number. They were : (1) Singhpuria or Faizalpuria, (2) Ahluwalia, (3) Ramgarhia, (4) Bhangi, (5) Kanheyia, (6) Sukarchakya, (7) Phulkian, (8) Dullewalia, (9) Nakkais, (10) Shahids, (11) Karorsinghia. and (12) Nishanwalia. These Misls derived their names 'from the name of the village, the district or the progenitor of the first or most eminent chief, or from some peculiarity of the custom of their leader.' For example, the Bhangis took their name from the addiction to *bhang* (an intoxicating preparation of hemp) of their famous leader Sardar Hari Singh. The Ahluwalias and Dullewalias derived their titles from the villages to which their chiefs belonged. The Ramgarhias took their name from Ram Rauni or Ramgarh, the famous fort with which the name of their founder Jassa Singh was so closely associated. The Phulkian took their name from Phul, their great ancestor. The Nishanwalias were so called because their leaders were sometimes the standard-bearers of the Dal Khalsa.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Lepel Griffin, however, says that it is wrong to say that there were twelve Misls, as some of these confederacies were hardly of sufficient importance to warrant their being included in the list of the Misls. The Nishanwalias, the Nakkais, the Karorsinghias or Panjgarhias and the Shahids were never of much consequence. Ibbetson also does not give them the place of the Misls. He styles them 'Dehras' or camps, distinct from the confederacies or the Misls. Thus, in his view, there were only eight Misls and four 'Dehras'. Those 'Dehras'<sup>2</sup> held only very small tracts of land<sup>3</sup> in the Malwa region of the Punjab. Besides, it should also be remembered that

Eight Misls and  
Four Dehras

1. Cunningham : *History of Sikhs*, p. 107

2. Ibbetson : *A Glossary of Tribes & Castes of Punjab & N.W.F.P.* : Vol. I, pp. 706-7

3. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*, pp. 78 to 80



all the Sikh Misl did not exist in their full strength at one and the same time. Sometimes, one Misl gave birth to another. An aspiring chief, first serving under one Misl, separated himself after some time from the original Misl and formed one of his own. The first Misl, Singhpuria or Faizalpuria, was founded by Nawab Kapur Singh, and for some time Jassa Singh Ahluwalia served under Kapur Singh. But after some time, Jassa Singh founded his own Misl. Similarly, some of the Bhangi *Sardars* and the Sukerchakya chief served under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and, in course of time, carved out separate Misls of their own.

## II

### Political History of the Misls

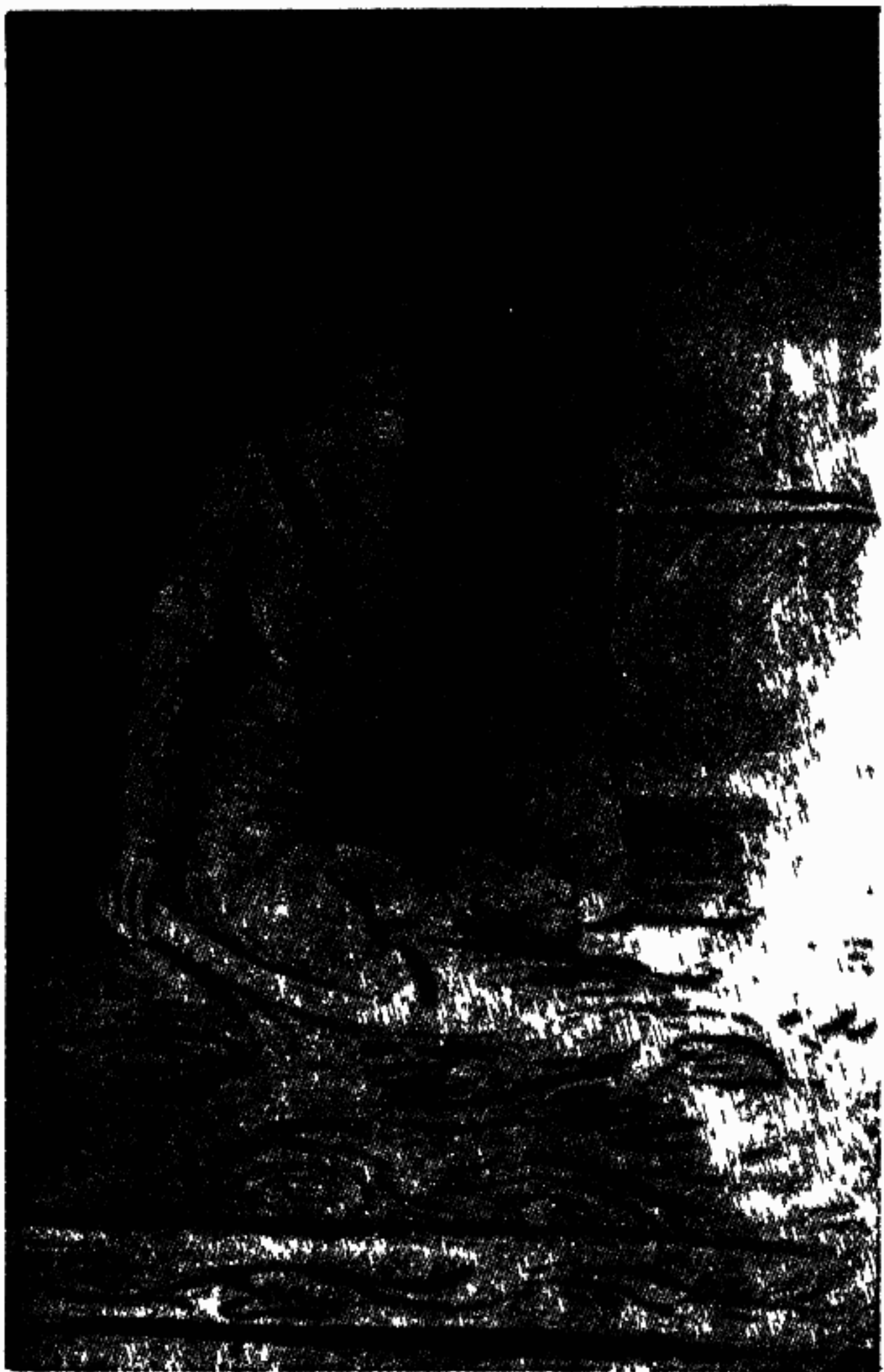
#### 1. The Faizalpuria or Singhpuria Misl

The first Misl which came into existence was the Faizalpuria or Singhpuria Misl. The first important village which was wrested by its founder, Nawab Kapur Singh, was Faizalpuria Misl  
puria Misl  
pura, which was, later on, named Singhpur. It is why the Misl is known by these two names.

The founder of this Misl, Nawab Kapur Singh, was the son of a Jat peasant, Dalip Singh. He took the *pahaul* from Bhai Mani Singh. He was in his times the most respected of all the Sikhs, and was practically the head of the Khalsa in almost all religions and political affairs, from 1734 to 1748. He was ever ready to be in the front, and had received, in various battles, forty-three wounds on his body. Besides being a great warrior, he was also a pious devotee of the Gurus and propagated Sikhism with great enthusiasm. He is said to have converted a large number of people—Jats, carpenters, weavers, etc. Some of the great chiefs, such as Ala Singh, of Patiala, and Bhag Singh (the maternal uncle of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia) took *pahaul* from him.

Nawab Kapur Singh—a Distinguished Leader

Nawab Kapur Singh was the first great leader of the Sikhs after the fall of Banda. In 1734, he was approached by the Mughal Governor of Lahore and the title of 'Nawab' was conferred



**Title of 'Nawab'—Organization of the Dal Khalsa** red on him. A *Jagir* of one lakh was also given to him. But he did not care for those honours and continued guiding the Sikhs in their struggle for independence. He was the man who organized the Dal Khalsa or the National Militia of the Sikhs, and in 1748 gave its command and control to his deputy, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. But so long as Nawab Kapur Singh lived, he was regarded as the leader of the *Sarbat Khalsa*. In 1753, the Nawab died at Amritsar and was succeeded by his nephew, Khushal Singh.

**Khushal Singh and Budh Singh** Sardar Khushal Singh, like his uncle, was also a great warrior and extended his conquests. He died in 1796 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Budh Singh. In 1816, Ranjit Singh annexed the Faizalpuria territories to his dominions. That Misl was not a very powerful Misl. It held possessions on both the east and the west of the Satluj and some of the important villages under its charge were Jullundur, Haibatpur, and Patti. It had only 2500 to 3000 armed retainers. But under Kapur Singh and Khushal Singh, even that small force was considered the most dreaded of all the Sikh forces.

## 2. The Ahluwalia Misl

The ancestors of the founder of the Ahluwalia Misl first lived in the village Ahlu, five *kos* to the east of Lahore. Later on, some of them shifted to Lahore. They were 'Kalals' or distillers of spirit by profession.

**Early Career of Jassa Singh** The real founder of that Misl was the great veteran—Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. He belonged to the low caste of Kalals. He was born in 1718. When he was only five years old, his father, Badar Singh, died and, thus, he became an orphan. His mother, however, brought him up with great care. She took him to Mata Sundri and got her blessings. While still a boy, Jassa Singh was taken by Nawab Kapur Singh under his charge and some writers even say that the Nawab adopted him as his son.

**Jassa Singh Leads Sikh Bands against Muslim Enemies** In 1738, Jassa Singh came to the forefront. After Nadir Shah's invasion, he began to lead the Sikh bands against the Mohammadan Chiefs of the Punjab. It was Jassa Singh who with a large number of horse, harassed Diwan Jaspat Rai and Diwan Lakhpat Rai. That confrontation resulted in the mass massacre of the Sikhs. In 1747, he attacked Kasur and plundered it. He also

attacked and plundered the Jullundur Doab.

Thus, by 1748, Jassa Singh, by virtue of his ability, bravery and intrepidity, had come to occupy a very prominent position among the Sikh *Sardars*. Nawab Kapur Singh, who was then the acknowledged leader of the Khalsa, had grown old.

**Jassa Singh was  
Chosen as Leader  
of the Dal  
Khalsa in 1748**

He wanted to give the leadership of the Khalsa to a younger man and his eye fell on the promising Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Accordingly, when the Sarbat Khalsa met on the Baisakhi Day in 1748 at Amritsar, he, in that great assembly, placed Jassa Singh in the supreme command of all the Sikh forces, i.e. the Dal Khalsa.

In 1753, Kapur Singh died and with his death the leadership of the entire Sikh community passed on into the hands of Jassa Singh. Sir Lepel Griffin says, "Kapur Singh was, as long as he lived, the first of the Sikh Sardars, though Jassa Singh had obtained more than the lion's share of the fame. When Kapur Singh was dying, he made over to Jassa Singh the steel mace of the last Guru, thus appointing him, as it were, the successor to his influence which Jassa Singh, by his ability and courage, considerably increased."<sup>1</sup> Thus, while he was hardly thirty-five years old, Jassa Singh acquired the status and title of "Sultan-ul-Kaum."

**Jassa Singh—  
Sultan-ul-Kaum"**

Thereafter, Jassa Singh fought against the Afghans in all the major battles. It was Jassa Singh who joined Charat Singh and repulsed the attack of Khwaja Obed Khan when the latter tried to capture Gujranwala. In November 1761, Jassa Singh even laid siege to Lahore and occupied it. It is said that Jassa Singh even took the title of *Padshah* and struck the first Sikh coin which bore the following inscription :

**Jassa Singh De-  
feated Khwaja  
Obed, Governor  
of Lahore and St-  
ruck the First  
Sikh Coin**

"Sikka zad dar Jahān bafazle Akāl  
Mulḳ-i-Ahmad grift Jassā Kalāl"

(i. e. coined by the grace of God in the country of Ahmad, captured by Jassa Kalal).

Later on, when Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded the Punjab in 1762 to crush the Sikhs, Jassa Singh at that time was leading them

1. See Griffin : *The Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 461



**Jassa Singh's Defeat in Ghallughara, Followed by Rapid Recovery** at Kup and he suffered a heavy defeat which is known as Ghallughara in Sikh history. But the Sikhs under Jassa Singh recovered very rapidly and in the following year, i.e. 1763, he, along with other Sikh *Sardars*, attacked Sirhind and defeated and killed its Afghan Governor, Zain Khan. In 1764, Jassa Singh even extended his raids up to Delhi.

**Jassa Singh Extends His Conquests** After 1767, Ahmad Shah ceased to invade the Punjab, and thereafter, Jassa Singh greatly extended his conquests. He seized Raikot and Kapurthala from the Muslim Chiefs who held them. He also formed a coalition with the Bhangis, Kanheyias, and the Sukurchakiyas against the Ramgarhia Misl and succeeded in capturing its possessions. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was forced to take shelter in Haryana, and it is said that he could not recover his possessions so long as Jassa Singh Ahluwalia remained alive.

**Death of Jassa Singh** Jassa Singh Ahluwalia died in 1783 at Amritsar where a monument to his memory still stands in the Derah of Baba Atal. He led the Sikhs when they were not yet fully organized. His courage and intrepidity were remarkable and Griffin styles him as 'a most successful general in the field.' He was also deeply religious and was much respected by the Sikhs. Some of the great Sikh Chiefs, such as Amar Singh of Patiala, took *pahul* from him. Jassa Singh occupies a very high place in the history of the Sikhs, as he did more than any other chief to consolidate the Sikh power in the most critical period of the Punjab history.

**Character and Estimate** Jassa Singh was a tolerant ruler and he permitted his Muslim subjects and employees to follow their own religious observances without molestation. He, however, did not permit the Muslims to kill cows. Griffin says that "on this point Jassa Singh was a thorough bigot and twice he made expeditions to punish contumacious cow-killers, once at Kasur and once at Lahore."<sup>1</sup> He was also very liberal. Ahmad Shah Abdali had pulled down some buildings at Amritsar. The credit of rebuilding and beautifying Amritsar and the Harmandir goes to him. Jassa Singh also constructed a great reservoir at Anandpur. He also opened a public kitchen (*langar*) at Kapurthala

1. Griffin : *The Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 471

from which hundreds got free food every day.

Jassa Singh had no son and, consequently, his cousin Bhag Singh succeeded him. The new Ahluwalia chief tried to extend his conquests, but failed. He died in 1801 and was succeeded by his son, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. Fateh Singh was a brave general. Even Ranjit Singh did not dare to wage war against him. On the other hand, he exchanged his turban with the Maharaja and, thus, contracted friendship with him. That friendship proved very helpful to him in establishing his supremacy in the Punjab. Fateh Singh died in 1837 and his son Nihal Singh succeeded him. The descendants of Nihal Singh ruled the Kapurthala State for more than a century till it was integrated with the Patiala and East Punjab States Union in 1949. Now it forms a district of the Punjab State.

**Bhag Singh :**  
1783-1801

**Fateh Singh**  
**Ahluwalia: 1801-**  
1837

### 3. The Bhangi Misl

The founder of the Bhangi Misl was Sardar Hari Singh, son of Bhoma Singh, a Dhillon Jat of Hung. He was addicted to the use of the intoxicating drug, hemp (*bhang*), and also served it to others lavishly and that is why he and his descendants and followers began to be called 'Bhangis'.

The Bhangi Misl was the strongest Misl, both in numerical strength and territorial possessions. It had as many as 15,000 soldiers. It held the two chief cities of the Punjab—Amritsar and Lahore. Bhangi *Sardars* had also captured Gujrat and a portion of the territory lying between the Jehlum and the Indus as far as Rawalpindi. Hari Singh Bhangi, the first *Sardar* of that Misl, also tried to conquer Multan. Though he failed in that attempt, yet he was able to extend the boundaries of his principality right up to Pakpattan. The headquarters of the Bhangi Misl were at Amritsar where Hari Singh Bhangi is said to have built a beautiful *Katra*. The total annual revenue of the possessions of Hari Singh Bhangi was nearly Rs. 15,00,000. He was killed in action in 1770.

**Hari Singh**  
**Bhangi**

He was succeeded by Jhanda Singh who carried the Misl to its height of glory. He attacked Jammu and made its ruler, Ranjit Deo, pay him an annual tribute. He also waged war against the Nawab of Sarai and in the booty that, consequently, fell into his hands, he got the famous gun

**Jhanda Singh**

**'Zamzama'.** He also exacted tribute from the Chief of Kasur. In 1774, Jai Singh Kanheyia bribed one Mazhabi Sikh who assassinated Jhanda Singh.

After Jhanda Singh's assassination, his younger brother, Ganda Singh, succeeded him. He further increased the power of the Misl. He died in 1782. After his death, the Misl did not produce any strong and able *Sardar*.  
**Decline of the Misl** Ranjit Singh easily defeated the Bhangi Sardars and wrested both Lahore and Amritsar from them.

#### 4. The Ramgarhia Misl

The Ramgarhia Misl took its name from 'Ram Rauni' or 'Fortress of God' which was named Ramgarh by Jassa Singh Ichhogilia, the founder of the Misl. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was the son of Gyani Bhagwan Singh. He was born at Ichhogil in 1723. As he originally belonged to Ichhogil and his parents were carpenters by profession<sup>1</sup>, Jassa Singh, before he took the title of 'Ramgarhia', was known as Jassa Singh Ichhogilia or Jassa Singh 'Thoka' to distinguish him from the other great Jassa Singh Ahluwlia. He took *pahul* from Gurdial Singh of Panjgarh<sup>2</sup>.

It will not be out of place here to mention that 'Ramgarhia' is not any caste. Ibbetson says that "some of the 'Tarkhans' and 'lohars' are known to have been Jats or Rajputs who, within quite recent times, have taken to the hereditary occupation of their castes." Jassa Singh Ramgarhia belonged to the Rajput stock. He was Bhabra by caste and the Bhabras or Bhamras are the descendants of Dharam Bamboo, a Rathor Chief of Kannauj whose 21 generations<sup>3</sup> bore the title of Rao.

As Jassa Singh grew older, he took to the profession of arms and subsequently became very famous among the Sikhs as a brave and intrepid warrior. Up to 1734, Zakriya Khan, the Governor of Lahore, followed the policy of relentless persecution against the Sikhs. But in that year he tried to win over the Sikhs in a peaceful manner. It

**Joins the Service of Adina Beg**

1. Kanhya Lal : *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, pp. 91-92

2. Ibbetson : *The Punjab Castes*, p. 8

3. Crooke's *Tod's Annals and antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. II. p. 935

was about this time that Jassa Singh was taken into the service of the Lahore Governor and for his bravery and courage was rewarded with a rich *Jagir* of five villages. Later on, when Adina Beg wanted to enlist Sikh troops, Jassa Singh joined Adina Beg's service, most probably to have a thorough knowledge of the designs of the Muslims against the Sikhs.<sup>1</sup> Jassa Singh served Adina Beg for some time. In 1748, Adina Beg, along with Jassa Singh, marched on Amritsar and besieged the Sikh fortress of Ram Rauni to crush the power of the Sikhs. The part which Jassa Singh played at that time is best described by Khushwaqat Rai, the author of *Kitab-i-Tarikhi-i-Punjab* in the following words :

“Having arrived at Amritsar, they (Mir Mannu and Adina Beg) laid siege to the Fort of Ram Rauni which is now known as Ramgarh. The siege continued for four months (October 1748 to January 1749) and daily skirmishes took place. During that period, two hundred Sikhs out of the garrison were killed. The rest wrote to Jassa Singh Thoka who was in the Service of Adina Beg Khan, that he, being on the side of the Muslims, was the cause of their ruin; and if he did not come that day to their help, he would never be allowed to be re-admitted into their church. Jassa Singh, deserting Adina Beg Khan, entered the fort one night. That act of his strengthened and encouraged the besieged. Jassa Singh then sent a message to Diwan Kaura Mal, a believer in the religion of Guru Nanak, that “the garrison can secure relief only through your efforts. If you try, three hundred lives can be saved”<sup>2</sup>. Kaura Mal then persuaded Mir Mannu to raise the siege.

Thus, Jassa Singh saved the Sikhs at one of the most critical junctures and, consequently, the Sikhs handed him over the fort of Ram Rauni in reward for his services. It was rebuilt and renamed Ramgarh by him. And the Misl took its name from that fort.

Jassa Singh took full advantage of the confusion that followed the death of Mir Mannu and greatly increased his power. He

1. According to Rattan Singh Bhangu's *Panth Prakash*, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was excommunicated by the Khalsa and, consequently, he joined the service of Adina Beg.
2. Khushwaqat Rai : *Kitab-i-Tarikh-i-Punjab*. Folios 13-14, as quoted in H.R. Gupta's *History of the Sikh's*, pp. 61-62



**Jassa Singh  
Increases His  
Power**

occupied a large tract of the territory in the fertile area called Riarki in the north of Amritsar. He also held some possessions in the Jullundur Doab.

**Defeated by  
Jassa Singh  
Ahluwalia, Jai  
Singh Kanheyia  
and Others :  
1777**

As Jassa Singh Ramgarhia grew in power, the rival Sikh *Sardars*, Jai Singh Kanheyia, Charat Singh Sukarchakia and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Hari Singh Bhangi formed a coalition and drove the Ramgarhia *Sardar* to the south of the Satluj in 1777. That incident clearly shows the power that Jassa Singh had acquired at that time. No single Misl, not even one or two combined, dared to take any action against him, and it was only when all the important Misls pooled their resources that they were able to defeat the Ramgarhia *Sardar*.

After that defeat, Jassa Singh retired to the Malwa region of the Punjab and there, with the help of Amar Singh Phulkian, made himself the master of a small territory near Sirsa in Hissar. From that place, he extended his ravages up to the very walls of Delhi. Once, he penetrated into Delhi itself and carried away four guns and a large variegated slab of stone<sup>1</sup> from the Mughal quarters. He also attacked Meerut and exacted a heavy tribute from its Muslim Chief. He also punished the Hissar Governor who had maltreated two Brahman girls of that place.

**Jassa Singh  
Ramgarhia in  
Hariyana: 1777-83**

After the death of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia in 1783, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia came back to his original place of activity in the north-west and recovered all his possessions. He made Siri Hargobindpur the capital of his principality, and his vast possessions included Kalanapur, Qadian Ghuman, Dina Nagar and also some tracts of the Bist Jullundur Doaba. When Ranjit Singh wanted to establish his supremacy in the Punjab, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, along with Gulab Singh Bhangi, marched to Lahore to check his power, but was defeated at Bhasin. In 1803, Jassa Singh died.

**Reconquers His  
Riarki Posses-  
sions**

After the death of Jassa Singh, his son Jodh Singh succeeded him. Ranjit Singh developed friendship with him and so long as Jodh Singh remained alive, he did not wage war against the Ramgarhias.

**Jodh Singh**

But after his death, which occurred in 1814,

1. This beautiful slab can still be seen in the Ramgarhia Bunga at Amritsar. It is a huge slab, 6' × 4' ×  $\frac{3}{4}$ ' in dimensions.

Ranjit Singh seized the Ramgarhia possessions, though a handsome *jagir* was granted to the descendants of Jodh Singh.

### 5. The Kanheyia Misl

The founder of the Kanheyia Misl was Jai Singh. He belonged to the village of Kahna, fifteen miles east of Lahore, which gave the Misl the name it bears. Jai Singh Kanheyia was a great warrior and in the confusion that followed the death of Mir Mannu and the subsequent Afghan invasions, he established his supremacy over the fertile Riarki tract. He conquered Hajipur, Mukerian, Pathankot and Gurdaspore. He waged wars against Jhanda Singh Bhangi and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and, thus, further extended his conquests. He also conquered Kangra. Jai Singh, along with other Sikh Misldars, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Tara Singh Gheba, attacked Kasur and sacked and plundered that city.

In 1777, the Kanheyia Chief formed a coalition with Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Charat Singh Sukarchakya and attacked the territory of his powerful neighbour, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, and drove him out of it. Most of the Ramgarhia villages and towns were annexed to the Kanheyia Confederacy. In 1783, however, Jai Singh Kanheyia and Mahan Singh Sukarchakya fell out and, consequently, the latter invited Jassa Singh Ramgarhia to his aid. The old Ramgarhia *Sardar*, thereupon, came back to seize his Riarki possessions and near Batala, a severe fight took place between Gurbux Singh, son of Jai Singh, and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. Gurbux Singh was killed in the battle and the Kanheyias suffered a crushing defeat. Jassa Singh, thus, re-established his power in his old territory, including Batala. A little later, Jai Singh won over Mahan Singh and also made alliance with the Rajas of Chamba and Nurpur and attempted to recover Batala, but Jassa Singh Ramgarhia proved too strong for him.

Jai Singh next tried to cement his friendship with the Sukarchakya Chief. He married his grand-daughter Mahtab Kaur (daughter of Gurbux Singh) to Ranjit Singh, the son of Mahan Singh. That marriage later on proved to be an important event in the career of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, as the mother of Mahtab Kaur, Mai Sada Kaur, became a ladder by which the young

**Sukarchakya Chief rose to power.**

After the death of Jai Singh, the direction of the affairs of the Kanheyia Misl passed into the hands of Mai Sada Kaur. For some time, Ranjit Singh did not touch her possessions; but after he had consolidated his position, he seized the Kanheyia territories and annexed them to his dominions.

## 6. The Sukarchakya Misl

It was that Misl, the Sukarchakya, to which the great Maharaja Ranjit Singh belonged. The founder of that great Misl was Charat Singh. He was born in 1721. By 1752, he had gained a large following. He led his followers into the tracts of the Rachna Doab and occupied some of its territory. In 1756, he married the daughter of Sardar Amir Singh of Gujranwala. "This marriage", says Latif, "united the wealth and strength of the two *Sardars* and led to the formation of a separate Misl which, after the place where he resided, was named the Sukarchakya Misl".<sup>1</sup> After consolidating his position, Charat Singh attacked Eminabad, plundered the city and drove out its Mughal *Faujdar*. In 1758, he attacked Sialkot and took possession of it.

The rising power of Charat Singh made Khwaja Obed Khan, the Governor of Lahore, take a firm action against him. Accordingly in 1760, he marched on Gujranwala but the invading army was completely routed by Charat Singh and his Sikh allies. In 1762, when Ahmed Shah Abdali invaded India for the sixth time, Charat Singh, at the head of a band of chosen men harassed the march of the Afghans, and plundered their baggage.'

After the departure of Ahmad Shah from the Punjab, Charat Singh resumed his career of conquest. He sacked Wazirabad and even extended his raids as far as Rohtas. In 1774, Charat Singh marched at the head of a large force towards Jammu. But in the thick of the war, he was accidentally killed by the bursting of a matchlock in the hands of one of his followers.

1. Latif : *History of the Punjab*, p. 338

After the death of Charat Singh, his son Mahan Singh succeeded him. But Mahan Singh was a minor and so, for some

years, the affairs of that confederacy were directed by Mai Desan, the widow of Charat Singh. In 1780, Mahan Singh took the affairs of the government in his own hands. Some of the dependent Sikh chiefs of the Misl tried to assert their independence, but young Mahan Singh reduced them to submission. He attacked Rasalnagar and Alipur and conquered them. He changed their names to Ramnagar and Akalgarh respectively. Mahan Singh also marched upon Jammu and laid waste most of the Jammu territory.

His rising power brought him into conflict with Jai Singh Kanhera. Mahan Singh, thereupon, invited Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and in alliance with him inflicted a crushing defeat on Jai Singh near Batala. Later on, however, a reconciliation took place between Mahan Singh and Jai Singh and the latter married his grand-daughter to Ranjit Singh, the minor son of the former. In 1793, Mahan Singh died and was succeeded by his son Ranjit Singh.

## 7. The Phulkian Misl

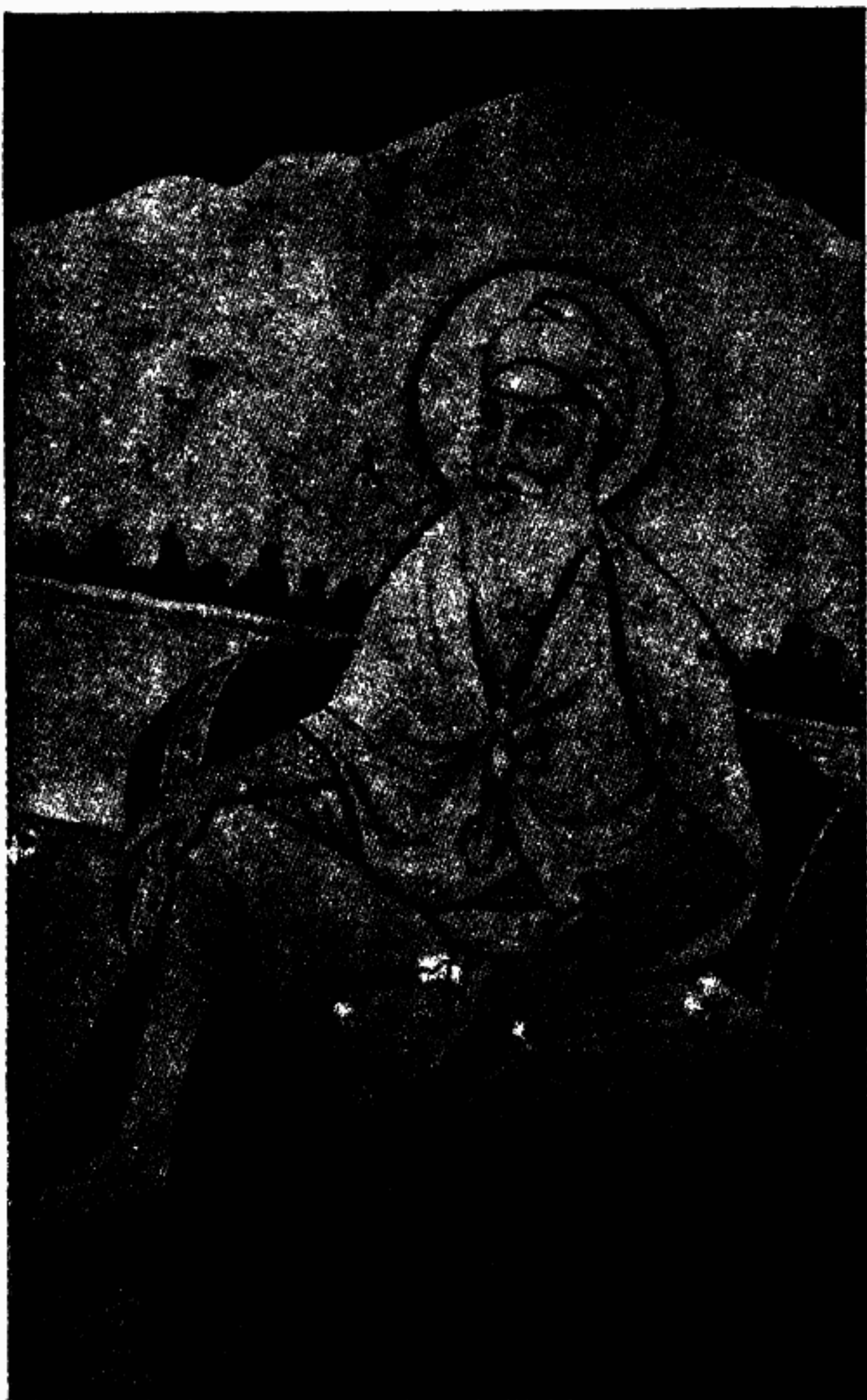
The founder of the Phulkian Misl was Chaudhri Phul, a Sandhu Jat. He was the common ancestor of the Chiefs of Patiala, Nabha and Jind States. Phul was blessed with power and plenty by the seventh Sikh Guru, Guru Har Rai. He had said, 'The steeds of Phul's descendants shall drink water as far as the Jamna. They shall have sovereignty for many generations and be honoured in proportion as they serve the Guru'.<sup>1</sup> Phul's sons, Rama and Tiloka, received further blessings from Guru Govind Singh who gave them a *Hukamnama* in which he wrote "Tera Ghar Mera Asai."

It was, however, the grandson of Chaudhri Phul, Baba Ala Singh, who raised the Phulkian Misl to great power. During the period of chaos and confusion in the middle of the eighteenth century, he greatly increased the extent of his territory in the neighbourhood of Barnala. In 1762, after the great Ghallughara, Ahmad Shah Abdali appoin-

1. Macaulife : Sikh Religion Vol. VI, p. 291







ted Ala Singh as his deputy in the Malwa region and, in return, levied on him a heavy annual tribute. In 1764, he joined the Sikh Sardars when they attacked Sirhind and defeated Zain Khan. By 1765, Ala Singh had grown so powerful that the Abdali invader bestowed upon him a drum and a banner, 'Tabl-o-Alam', as insignia of royalty. Baba Ala Singh was not only a great warrior, but also a saintly figure. He led a pious life and in order to retain his long hair, he paid 1,25,000 rupees extra to the Abdali Chief. His wife, Mai Fatto, ran a *langar* for the poor and the needy.

In 1765, Ala Singh died. He was succeeded by his grandson, Amar Singh. Under him, Patiala became the strongest State in the territories lying between the Sutlej and the Jamna. He conquered Mani Majra, Kot Kapura, Saifabad and Bhatinda. He also took possession of Hansi, Hissar and Rohtak. He was such a powerful ruler that he received the title of Raja-i-Rajgan Bahadur from Ahmad Shah Abdali. He even struck his own coins. It is said that the Bhattis and the Mughals tried to check his rising power, but failed. Amar Singh died of dropsy at the age of thirty-five.

He was succeeded by his seven-year-old son, Sahib Singh, who proved to be a weak ruler. In his reign, the Marathas invaded Patiala but were repulsed by Sahib Singh's heroic sister, Bibi Sahib Kaur. But some time after that invasion, Sahib Singh and his wife, Aus Kaur, quarrelled with each other. That conflict gave Maharaja Ranjit Singh an opportunity to invade the Malwa territory of the Punjab. Ranjit Singh's designs on the 'cis-Sutlej' (Malwa) territory made the British intervene and, consequently, they took all the Phulkian States under their protection by the treaty of Amritsar in 1809.

### 8. The Dallewalia Misl

The Dallewalia Misl derived its name from the village Dallewal where its original founder Gulab Singh resided. But the greatest figure of this Misl was Tara Singh Gheba who was originally a shepherd. He was a great warrior and took active part in the attacks on Sirhind and Kasur. He had amassed a great fortune. On his death, Ranjit Singh seized his possessions.

### 9. The Nishanwalia Misl

The Nishanwalia was not a very important Misl. Its founders,

Sangat Singh and Mohar Singh were the standard-bearers of the Dal Khalsa and, hence, they were styled as Nishanwalias. Their main possessions were Ambala and Shahabad. Ranjit Singh waged war against the Nishanwalia Chiefs and captured most of their possessions. But when the cis-Satluj territory was taken under protection by the British, Ambala lapsed to the British Government, whereas Shahabad became a dependency of the British.

### 10. The Karor Singhia Misl

The Karor Singhia Misl is also known as Panjgarhia Misl. Its first great leader was Bhagel Singh who made himself master of Bhunga, Nawanshahr and Rurka. Bhagel Singh and his successor Jodh Singh even extended their conquests in the Malwa region. Most of their possessions, later on, were either absorbed into the Kalsia State or in Ranjit Singh's dominions.

### 11. The Shahids or Nihangs

The Shahid Misl was founded by those Sikhs who were later on beheaded by the Musalmans. Its first leader was Baba Dip Singh. But later on, Sardar Karam Singh and Gurbaksh Singh became its leaders. The followers of those *Sardars* were mostly Akalis who wore blue clothes and wore a sharp quoit round the head. They held territory in the east of the Satluj and had two thousand horsemen under their command.

### 12. The Nakai Misl

The founder of the Nakai Misl was Sardar Hira Singh. He was born in 1706 and took *pahaul* from Bhai Mani Singh, when he was about thirty years old. Like other Sikh *Sardars*, he armed himself to defend his religion. In course of time, he carved out a small estate in the Nakka territory, lying between Lahore and Gogera in the direction of Multan. Sardar Hira Singh died in 1769 and was succeeded by his cousin Nahar Singh. He, too, died after a few years (1772).

After Nahar Singh's death, Ram Singh became the head of the Nakai Misl. He was a powerful chief and extended his territory. He ruled over Chunian, Sahiwal, Sharakpur and Kot Kamalia. After his death, the Misl began to decline. In 1807,



**Maharaja Ranjit Singh attacked the territories of the Nakais and seized all their possessions.**

**Books for Further Study**

1. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
2. Cunningham : *History of the Sikhs*
3. H. R. Gupta : *History of the Sikhs, Vols. II & III*
4. Khazan Singh : *History and Philosophy of Sikh Religion*
5. A. C. Bannerji : *Anglo-Sikh Relations*
6. Franklin : *Memoirs of George Thomas*
7. Ibbetson : *Glossary of the Tribes of Punjab and N. W. F. P.*
8. Ratan Singh : *Prachin Panth Prakash*
9. Gyan Singh : *Panth Prakash*
10. Kanhaiya Lal : *Tarikh-i-Punjab*
11. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*
12. Griffin : *Chiefs of the Punjab*
13. Griffin : *Rajas of the Punjab*
14. Crooks : *Tod's Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*

## CHAPTER XVII

### The Organization of the Sikh Misls

#### I

There is much controversy regarding the nature of the Misl organization. Cunningham describes the Misls as 'theocratic confederate feudalism.'<sup>1</sup> While explaining it, Cunningham says that it was theocratic because 'God was their helper and only Judge', 'Community of faith or object was their moving principle' and the devotion to the Steel of Govind was their material instrument. Besides, twice a year they met at the sacred city of Amritsar and there, before the *Guru Granth*, used to draw plans of common action. Secondly, it was confederate, because those Misls were not completely independent. They were loosely knit together by the institution of *Sarbat Khalsa*, a sort of Central assembly, which in times of danger of a common enemy, controlled the foreign policy of all the Misls. Cunningham further remarks that the Misl organization was feudal in character. Explaining it, he says, "The obvious feudal or military notion of a chain of dependence was acknowledged as the law and the federated Chiefs partitioned their joint conquests among themselves and divided their respective shares in the same manner among their own leaders of bands, while these again subdivided their portions among their own dependents, agreeably to the general custom of sub-infeudation."

Nature of the  
Misl Organization

(i)  
Cunningham's  
View : "Theocratic  
Confederate  
Feudalism"

But A. C. Bannerjee<sup>2</sup> says that the Sikh Misl organization was not a theocratic confederate feudalism. The Misls were neither governed strictly on the principles of Sikh religion, nor did the Sikh priests hold complete sway in the Misl polity. It was also not feudal in nature, as feudalism cannot exist apart from monarchy. Besides, the subordinate Sikh chief showed no military or fiscal obligation to their chief. They could easily transfer their services. Thus, the Misl, as A. C. Bannerjee says, "really formed a confederacy which was democratic in composition and religious in its cohesive principles."<sup>2</sup> In other

(ii)  
Bannerjee's views  
—Misl Democratic  
in Composition  
and Religious  
in Its Cohesive  
Principles

(iii)  
Ibbetson's View  
—"A Curious  
Mixture of theocracy,  
Democracy  
and Absolutism"

1. Cunningham : *History of the Sikhs*, p. 105

2. A.C. Banerjee : *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p. LXVII

words, the Sikh Misls were confederacies or associations of warriors united by the ties of religion. The dominant feature of their organization was equality. Ibbetson says that the organization of the Sikh Misls was "a curious mixture of theocracy, democracy and absolutism. The Sikh Sardars and Soldiers all fought for the Guru and when they assembled at Amritsar before the *Guru Granth*, they did what the religious gathering decided. It was democratic because every soldier or member of the Misl enjoyed social and political equality. But as there was no regular machinery to check the Sardar, it was virtually an absolutism."<sup>1</sup>

## II

### The Gurmata—Meaning, Functions and Working

The supreme organization of the Sikh Misls was the *Sarbat Khalsa* which conducted its business through resolutions called *gurmata*s. This word, 'Gurmata' consists of two Punjabi words 'Guru' and 'mata'. 'Guru' means 'spiritual teacher' and 'mata' means 'the advice of the 'Guru'. After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs from different parts of the country used to meet at Amritsar on certain festive occasions, such as Dussehra, Diwali and Baisakhi and, there at Akal Takht in the presence of the *Holy Granth*, they used to discuss the common plan of action for the entire community and that meeting of the entire Sikh community at Amritsar was called the "Sarbat Khalsa". The decisions of the "Sarbat Khalsa" were embodied in the form of resolutions or 'Gurmata's'. Gradually this procedure developed into an institution. The Sikh Misldars, after they had occupied the Punjab, began to meet regularly at Amritsar, generally twice a year (on Baisakhi and Diwali) to transact there all business concerning the entire Sikh community.

The functions of this institution of the *Gurmata* were political, deliberative and judicial. One of its main functions was to choose a leader of the Khalsa Army, the Dal Khalsa, and to draw

1. Ibbetson : *Glossary*, p. IX, VII

**Functions of the Gurmata**

a plan of military operations against their common enemies. Sometimes, they would meet and discuss the plan and measures to spread their faith. They would also deliberate to end the private feuds of the *Sardars* of the different *Misls*. Sometimes, the *Gurmata* acted as a judicial body and decided cases of big *Sardars* and even cases of disputed succession.

**The Actual Working of the Gurmata**

Regarding the working of the *Gurmata*, Malcolm in his *Sketch of the Sikhs* gives the following description: "When the Chiefs meet on this solemn occasion, it is concluded that all private animosities cease and that every man sacrifices his personal feelings at the shrine of the general good; and actuated by principles of pure patriotism thinks of nothing but the interests of religion and the common-wealth to which he belongs."

When the Chiefs and principal leaders meet, the *Adi Granth* and the *Daswan Padshah Ka Granth* are placed before them and they exclaim "Wah Guruji ka Khalsa."

After this, the members resume their seats and when the prayers are offered, or the *karah parsad* (sacred preparation of *ghee*, sugar and flour) is distributed and eaten, signifying that they are all one. Then the *Akalis* or the *Granthis* read out the '*Gurmata*', *i. e.* 'the resolution', and when all give their assent, it is embodied in the prayer and again read aloud.

After this, the Sikh *Sardars* draw closer together and say to each other, "The Sacred Granth is between us; let us swear by our scriptures to forget all internal disputes, and be united"

**Period of the Gurmata's Supremacy**

Though there is no conclusive proof, yet it is alleged that the first *Gurmata* was held by Guru Gobind Singh. The last *Gurmata*, however, was called by Ranjit Singh in 1805. This does not mean that the Sikhs ceased to meet together after 1805. It simply means that during the period of the *Misls*, *i. e.* from 1748 to 1805, most of the political decisions concerning the entire Khalsa Community were made in a regular assembly of Sikh Chiefs which met at Akal Takht once or twice a year. But after 1805, Ranjit Singh set up an absolute Government and took all the functions of the *Gurmata* in his own hands. The '*Gurmata*', or collective decisions by the Sikhs, however, continued to be adopted when-



ever the Khalsa faced any serious religious or social problem. But after 1805, it ceased to be a political institution.

The institution of the *Gurmata* had no regular machinery to enforce its decisions. Nor was there any separate force maintained by the *Sarbat Khalsa* to make the chiefs carry out its decisions. The sanction behind the *Gurmata* was religious. All the heads of the *Misls* were the devotees of Nanak and the worshippers of the *Guru Granth*; and whatever they swore in the presence of the *Guru Granth* at their most sacred place, the Akal Takht, Amritsar, they would never dare to violate it. Besides, no single Sardar, howsoever powerful, could think of defying the will of the whole community—the Panth.

### III

#### The Internal Organization of the Misls

At the head of each Misl was the Sardar or Misaldar. He was a petty sovereign and absolutely supreme in the internal matters of the Misl. But generally, the Sardar did not interfere in the day-to-day life of his followers. Rather, the latter enjoyed a good deal of autonomy. Griffin says, "All that a Sikh Chief demanded in those days from a follower was a horse and a matchlock. All that a follower sought was protection and permission to plunder in the name of God and the Guru under the banner of the Chief. There was little question of pay." A follower of a smaller Sardar serving under the head of a Misl could easily leave him and seek service under another Misl. If a number of Misaldars were engaged in any action they would, after a victory, divide the booty among themselves on the basis of their strength in action, with further sub-division among their men on the same basis. George Thomas thus describes the position of a *Sardar*:

"Within his own domain, each chief is lord paramount. He exerts an exclusive authority over his vassals, even to the power of life and death and to increase the population of his districts, he proffers a ready and hospitable asylum to fugitives from all parts of India." He further says that though the government of the *Misls* is arbitrary, yet "there exists much less cause for oppression than in many of the neighbouring states".<sup>1</sup>

1. See *Memoires of George Thomas*, p. 76

The Misl administration was mainly a village administration. The unit of administration was the village which was like a small republic, enjoying a good deal of autonomy in local matters. Its important functionaries were the *Lambardar*, *Patwar*, *Chawkidar*, etc. But it was the Panchayats which maintained perfect justice and equity in the village. H.R. Gupta says, "The Panchayats or Council of Elders restrained the stronger and the weaker against any aggression."<sup>1</sup> The *Panchayat's* decisions were obeyed not because it had any force at its disposal, but because it could put social pressure on the people inhabiting the village under its charge. Besides, the villagers held the *Panchayats* in great esteem and the common belief among them was *Panchayat men Parmeshwar* (God acts through *Panchayats*). We also find from contemporaneous writings that the Panchayats maintained a sufficiently high standard of efficiency and integrity.

The villages comprising a Misl were of two types—the villages which were directly administered, and the villages which were only taken under protection, i.e. governed through the *Rakhi* system. From the villages directly under the Misl, the *Sardar* used to charge one-fifth of the produce of the irrigated land and one-fourth from the rainfed (*barani*) soil as land revenue. Besides, for the convenience of the farmer, this revenue was collected at the time of the two harvests—*rabi* and *kharif*.

There were, however, a large number of villages which were not directly administered by the Sikh *Sardar*, but which had sought the protection or *Rakhi* of the *Sardar*. From 1751 to 1762, there was anarchy in the Punjab. Invasions and civil wars frequently occurred. Roving bands of the Sikhs moved in different directions and sacked and plundered the villages. Inhabitants in those villages found themselves helpless to defend themselves from foreign as well as from internal attacks. Consequently, most of them sought the protection or *Rakhi* of the Sikh *Sardars*. A village under the *Rakhi* system was to place itself under a *Sardar* who was to afford it full protection "against plunder, theft or molestation of any other kind either from among themselves or from their neighbours and

1. H.R. Gupta : *A History of Sikhs*, Vol. I, pp. 318

government troops." In return, the village had to pay one-fifth of the estimated revenue of the village in two instalments in May and October, i.e. at the end of each of the two harvests, i.e. *rabi* and *kharif*. That was called the *Rakhi* or *Jamadari* system.

**Rakhi and Chauth Compared** This *Rakhi* system corresponded with the *Chauth* of the Marathas. The Sikhs charged one-fifth of the estimated income of the village, whereas the Marathas charged one-fourth. But the motive of the villagers in paying this 'black mail' money in both the cases was to save themselves from their repeated attacks. They thought that if they did not pay some handsome money, those bands would attack them with greater fury and cause much greater loss to them.

**Other Sources of Income** Besides the land revenue or the *rakhi*, the Sikh *Sardars* raised money in many other ways. The war booty was an important source of income. Besides, sometimes they exacted tributes from the petty chiefs. In addition to this, heavy duties "were levied on merchandise by each chief as it passed through his dominions." The shawl-trade, the horse-trade and the arms-trade yielded a good deal of income to the Sikh confederacies.

#### IV

#### Justice

**No Definite Code of Law** The Sikhs, during the period of Misl, did not possess a fully developed and up-to-date judicial system. They had no definite code of law to guide them in dispensing justice to the people. They were mainly guided by the old customs and general maxims of justice, as embodied in their sacred books. As there was no well-defined law, judges exercised a good deal of discretion and sometime even acted arbitrarily.

**Justice Regarded as Source of Income** Besides, most of the Sikh *Sardars* regarded justice not as a sacred duty, but as a source of income, and at every step they would raise money. For example, when a plaintiff, particularly in a case of theft, wanted to file a suit, he was to pay the magistrate or *thanedar* a sum of money equal to one-fourth of the value of the article and on the recovery of the stolen property, he was again

to pay some *nazrana*. In other cases, too, the offenders were fleeced. In case a man was found guilty, he was to pay heavy *jurmana* or fine ; if he was acquitted, he was to pay *shukrana* or gratitude money; and if the trial was prolonged, during the period of trial, he was to pay money called *Taj-Khana*.

As the Misl administration was generally the village administration, the most common court of justice was the village *panchayat*. H.R. Gupta says that the *panchayats* maintained perfect justice and equity in the villages and generally strove to bring reconciliation between the parties involved in the dispute. They, however, enjoyed limited jurisdiction and could not give any serious punishment. But the general reputation of the *panchayat* was good. Above the *panchayat* was the *Sardar's* court which could try all types of cases—civil and criminal—and could give any kind of punishment—fine, imprisonment, mutilation of limbs or even give the right of self-redress or 'Gaha' to the wronged party. The death punishment was rarely given. Sometimes, certain cases, particularly those in which the Chief of the Misl was involved or in which the general interests of the Sikh religion were concerned, were taken to the assembly of the *Sarbat Khalsa*.

The 'Gaha' like the '*Lax talionis*' of the Romans or self-redress, was a very common feature of the judicial system of the Misaldars. For example, in cases of highway robbery, if the *Sardar* in whose village or territory the offence occurred, delayed or refused to make any restitution, the aggrieved party had the right to attack the territory in which the robbery had been committed and drive away several hundred head of cattle, or the aggrieved party could retaliate in any other way it liked. Similarly, in case of murders, the murderers were handed over to the relations of the deceased to be lynched.

The 'Gaha' or  
Self-redress  
System

## V

### Army

It is very difficult to determine the exact strength of the army of the Sikh Misls. Some Misls, e.g. the Bhangi Misl, maintained as many as 20,000 soldiers, whereas the smaller *misls* like



**Total Strength  
of the Sikh Army**

Nakais and Nihangs had only three to five thousand horsemen. Some of the Europeans who visited the Punjab in the latter half of the eighteenth century have given varying accounts of the total military strength of the Sikh Misls. According to Forster, the army of the Sikhs in 1783 was nearly two lakhs. Brown's estimate is very moderate. He says that the Sikhs had only 73,000 horse and 25,000 foot. Franklin, writing in 1800, says that the Sikhs had 24,800 cavalry only and forty field guns. From the above versions, we can safely conclude that the Sikhs throughout the Misl Period had more than one lakh soldiers and towards the close of the eighteenth century their army had enormously increased.

**Cavalry—the  
Backbone of the  
Misl Army**

The great mass of the Sikhs were horsemen and they were known for their effective use of matchlock, when mounted. The Sikh soldier considered it below his dignity to fight without a horse. It is why the infantry was not an important branch of the army of the Misls and was only used to garrison a few forts which the Misldars had in their possession. The Sikhs also did not depend much on heavy artillery. In fact, one of the greatest difficulties that they experienced while fighting against the Afghans and the Mughals was the dearth of field-guns. In the latter half on the eighteenth century, however, the Misldars had captured a few heavy field-guns and had, thus, acquired the position to give a pitched battle to the enemy. Franklin, writing in 1800, says that the Sikh Misls had only forty field-guns.

**No Training to  
Sikh Soldiers**

The Sikh soldiers were given no training in drill and discipline. They were not taught how to march and how to make plans for offence or defence. Besides, the *Sardars* had not divided their army into regular regiments or companies of uniform size. The Sikh soldiers moved in bands of undefined numbers. This serious shortcoming, however, was compensated by their religious fervour and single-minded

**Religious Fervour**

devotion to the Panth ; and it was that factor which ultimately led to their repeated victories.

**Weapons and  
Methods of War-  
fare**

Regarding the weapons that the Sikh soldiers used in those days, the most popular among them were swords, spears, daggers, matchlocks and sabres. They were particularly expert in handling the matchlock and the sabre. As to their methods of warfare, they generally adopted the guerilla tactics. They would not

draw lines or give pitched fighting.

Thus, from the above study, we find that the Sikhs during the period of the Misls did not have a highly developed system of administration. Browne says that it was 'irregular and imperfect.' But H.R. Gupta, who has made a thorough study of this period, says, "On the whole, this system proved a blessing to the people, weary of long and perpetual warfare and anarchy in the country."

**Conclusion**

### **Books For Further Study**

1. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
2. Cunningham : *History of the Sikhs*
3. H.R. Gupta : *History of the Sikhs*, Vols. II & III
4. Khazan Singh : *History and Philosophy of Sikh Religion*
5. A.C. Bannerjee : *Anglo-Sikh Relations*
6. Franklin : *Memoirs of George Thomas*
7. Ibbetson : *Glossary of the Tribes of Punjab and N.W.F.P.*
8. Ratan Singh : *Prachin Panth Prakash*
9. Gyan Singh : *Panth Prakash*
10. Kanhaya Lal : *Tarikh-i-Punjab*
11. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*
12. Griffin : *Chiefs of the Punjab*
13. Griffin : *Rajas of the Punjab*
14. Payne : *A Short History of Sikhs*



# CHAPTER XVIII

## RISE TO POWER OF RANJIT SINGH

1780-1799

### I

#### His Birth and Early Life

Ranjit Singh was born<sup>1</sup> at Gujranwala on November 2, 1780. He was the grandson of Charat Singh, the founder of the Sukarchakia Misl, and was the only son of Mahan Singh. **Ranjit Singh—**  
**Birth and Childhood : 1780-1792** His mother, Raj Kaur, was a daughter of Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind. As she belonged to the Malwa region of the Punjab, she was also known as Mai Malwain. Very little is known about the childhood of Ranjit Singh. But all the authorities agree that he, being the only son of his father, was very much fondled. No attention was paid to his education and he grew up quite illiterate. He spent most of his time in dissipation and indulgence. Latif says that he “spent his days in hunting, indulging in every kind of excess and gratifying his youthful passions and desires.” While hardly six years of age, he was betrothed to Mehtab Kaur, the grand-daughter of Sardar Jai Singh, the leader of the Kanheya Misl. It was also when he was a child that Ranjit was attacked by smallpox of the most virulent type. On that occasion, huge sums of money were given in charity in the hope of averting the doom which threatened him. There had come a time when his parents had lost all hope of his recovery. However, after a few days of anxiety, Ranjit’s condition showed improvement and, eventually, to the relief of all concerned, he recovered. But smallpox had permanently disfigured him and deprived him of the sight of his left eye. From the age of ten onwards, we find Ranjit Singh accompanying his father in his military expeditions, and, thus, at a tender age, he gained training and experience in the methods of fighting of those days.

In 1792, his father died.<sup>2</sup> For the next five years, the affairs

1. Sinha says that Ranjit Singh was born on the 13th of November and not on the 2nd. Osborne says that he was born on Nov. 2, 1780.

2. Mahan Singh was only twenty-seven when he died. See Osborne : *Ranjit Singh*.



of the Sukarchakya Misl were conducted by his mother, Mai Malwain. She was a woman of indifferent character and the real power during her regency was in the hands of her favourite, Diwan Lakhpat Rai. In 1796, Ranjit Singh married Mehtab Kaur and with that marriage, Sada Kaur, the mother-in-law of Ranjit, also began to take part in the administration of the Sukarchakya Misl. Sada Kaur was a woman of extraordinary courage and ability. She was "one of the most artful and ambitious of her sex that ever figured in the Sikh history" and it is said of her that she wanted to render the whole of the Punjab subject to her own domination. But she did not know the temperament of her son-in-law who would not like to become a stepping-stone for others and she soon found that "the role she had designed for him was the very one she was to play herself."<sup>1</sup>

In his seventeenth year, Ranjit Singh decided to end the 'triune' regency of his mother, his mother-in-law and Dewan Lakhpat Rai. He, therefore, took the reins of government in his own hands in 1797. It is said that Ranjit Singh had grown tired of the intrigues and scandals of his mother and the Dewan and, therefore, got rid of them by putting both of them to death.<sup>2</sup>

But N. K. Sinha has argued that it is incredible to think of Ranjit Singh as guilty of matricide; and there is no positive evidence to show that he had any hand even in the death of the Dewan. After overthrowing the 'triune' regency, Ranjit Singh appointed Dal Singh, maternal uncle of his father, his Prime Minister; and it was Dal Singh who put the turban of *Sardari* on the head of the young Ranjit.

Thus, the early life of Ranjit Singh is in striking contrast to that of Shivaji. The latter had the fortune of having Dadaji Kondadev, a man of great learning and vision as his guardian; whereas the former's guardian, Dewan Lakhpat, was a selfish and dissolute scamp. The

1. Payne : *A short History of Sikhs*, p. 72

2. Latif : *History of Punjab*, p. 346

Major Smyth says that he saw pictures, depicting Ranjit Singh, while murdering his mother, being sold in the open bazaar. Prinsep, however, says that Ranjit Singh only imprisoned his mother.

mother of Shivaji, Jija Bai, was greatly devoted to her child and, she, by narrating the stories of ancient Indian heroes, had prepared her son for the great struggle which he later on waged against the Mughal rulers. On the other hand, Raj Kaur, the mother of Ranjit Singh, showed no interest in the welfare of her child. Ranjit Singh, however, was endowed by nature with certain qualities of head and heart, owing to which he rose to great eminence in the history of the Punjab.

## II

### Condition of the Punjab in 1797

In 1797, when Ranjit Singh assumed the leadership of the Sukarchakya Misl, he was neither the most leading Sikh *Sardar* nor was his territory as extensive as that of other Misaldars. He was then the master of only a few districts of the Rachna Doab and the Chaj Doab.

**Ranjit Singh's  
Territorial  
Possessions in  
1797**

His authority extended over Gujranwala and Wazirabad, besides some areas of Sialkot, Rohtas and Pind Dadan Khan. His father had exacted 'Nazrana' from the Raja of Jammu, but no territory of the chief of Jammu had been annexed to the Sukarchakia Misl. Nevertheless, his position in relation to his co-religionists was not very unfavourable.

Of all the Misls holding possessions in the north and the west of the Satluj at that time, the most important was the Bhangi Misl. It held Lahore, Amritsar, Gujrat and Sialkot.

**Ranjit Singh's  
Position in Rela-  
tion to Other  
Sikh Sardars**

But luckily for Ranjit Singh, his contemporaneous Bhangi Sardars were neither too efficient nor too vigilant. Gulab Singh Bhangi, the head of the Misl, was a debauchee and so could not be regarded as a serious rival of Ranjit Singh. The other Bhangi Sardars, Sahib Singh of Gujrat, and Lehna Singh and Gujar Singh of Lahore, were neither strong nor united. The frequent raids of Zaman Shah had further weakened those Bhangi Chiefs. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, who had won great laurels in both the trans-Satluj and cis-Satluj wars, though still alive, was too old to offer any opposition to young Ranjit Singh. Another rival Misl, which could challenge the rising power of Ranjit at the time, was the Ahluwalia Misl. But fortunately for him, its greatest Sardar, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, had died in 1783 and his successor, Fateh Singh, though quite powerful and strong, did not command the same position and prestige in

the Sikh Commonwealth as was enjoyed by his predecessor, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. In the same way, the Kanheyia Misl in the neighbourhood of the Sukarchakia Misl was also on the decline. Jai Singh Kanheyia and Gurbux Singh Kanheyia had died ; and the widow of Gurbux Singh, Mai Sada Kaur, instead of being an obstacle in the path of Ranjit Singh, became a ladder by which Ranjit rose to power. Other Misaldars were either too engrossed in their debaucheries, or were so much jealous of one another that they could not offer any united resistance. Thus, at the time of Ranjit Singh's assumption of the leadership of the Sukarchakia Misl, there was no serious rival among his Sikh brethren who could offer any serious opposition to him in his ambitious scheme of establishing his supremacy over the entire Khalsa.

To the south and the east of the Satluj also, there were a number of powerful Sikh Sardars, the foremost among them being the Phulkian Chief of Patiala, named Sahib Singh. But Ranjit Singh and the Malwa or Cis-Satluj Chief the Phulkian Raja was neither capable nor ambitious enough to cross the Satluj and make a bid for the possessions of other Sikh chiefs. He was also not very much interested in the affairs and politics of the Sikhs inhabiting the areas lying to the east of the Satluj. Thus, Ranjit Singh could not expect any resistance from that quarter so long as his activities were confined up to the west bank of the River Satluj.

Though Ranjit Singh could not expect any serious opposition and resistance from his co-religionists, yet there were others who, also like him, were entertaining the design of establishing their supremacy over the plains of the Punjab. The Katoch Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra was dreaming of conquering all the Punjab States and then moving down into the plains and establishing his authority there too. Thus, he was bound to come into conflict with Ranjit Singh who, too, had determined to make a bid for the whole of the Punjab.

Besides, in those days, the Gurkhas of Nepal were planning to advance westward. After suffering a defeat at the hands of the Chinese, they had conquered Garhwal and Kumaon in 1794. They, then, thought of conquering the Simla Hill States. Under their able leader, Amar Singh Thapa, they were seriously thinking of conquering the Punjab. The Gurkha aggression, therefore, was also bound to come into collision with the ambition of Ranjit Singh.

However, Ranjit Singh, at the time of his accession to power, could have no fear of the Marathas or the British. Of course, in 1797, Delhi was held by Daulat Rao Sindhia and he was busy re-organizing his forces with the help of French officers. Some other Maratha chieftains, e.g. Dhara Rao, had even invaded the territory of Malwa, the cis-Satluj States, but they were concerned with loot and plunder of the territory south of the Satluj rather than with the extending of the Maratha rule in the Punjab. They had no designs against the Sikhs inhabiting the territory north of the Satluj. Thus, in 1799, when Ranjit Singh appeared on the scene, the Marathas were not serious rivals of the young Sukarchakia leader in making a bid for the mastery of the Punjab. The British, too, were yet far away. By 1797, they had not even conquered Delhi, and, besides, between Delhi and Ranjit Singh's possessions, there were the cis-Satluj or the Malwa Sikh States which would, for some time at least, delay the British advance and give enough time to Ranjit Singh to consolidate his position in the north-western regions of the Punjab.

There were, however, a number of Pathan and Afghan chiefs in the Punjab, who would not favour the idea of a young Sikh establishing his supremacy over the whole of the Punjab. Kasur, Multan, Peshawar, Attock and Kashmir were held by Muslim chiefs and they would not tolerate the idea of a Sikh ruler governing the whole of the Punjab. Thus, Ranjit Singh's designs to make a bid for the whole of the Punjab were bound to bring him into conflict with the Muslim chiefs of the above-mentioned areas. Nizam-ud-din of Kasur was the first among them to feel jealous of Ranjit Singh's power and he gave him a tough fight. Similarly, Muzaffer Khan Sadozai of Multan was bound to resist Ranjit Singh in case the latter tried to establish his sway over Multan. In the same way, if Ranjit Singh was to push forward his conquests towards the north-west, he was bound to face the united opposition of the Afghan chiefs backed by the whole might of the Afghan Kingdom.

The Afghans regarded themselves as the rightful masters of the Punjab, and it was from them that Ranjit Singh expected a very stiff opposition. In 1752, Ahmad Shah Abdali had conquered the Punjab which had been annexed to the Afghan dominions. The Sikh Sardars, however, had organized



themselves and driven out Ahmed Shah. After the latter's death, his son Timur had tried to recover the rich plains of the Punjab, but had failed. In 1793 after the death of Timur Shah, Shah Zaman ascended the throne of Kabul. The young Shah Zaman, like Ranjit Singh, had the ambition to establish his sway over the Punjab. With a view to achieving his aims, he led several invasions into the Punjab. By 1795, he had twice raided the Punjab and had conquered all the territory up to Hassan Abdal. During his third invasion which was undertaken in 1797, he captured Lahore and even planned to advance farther up to Delhi; but on account of certain troubles in Afghanistan he had to beat a hasty retreat. But, before leaving the Punjab, he had appointed Ahmad Khan Shahanchi to maintain law and order in the newly conquered territories.

### III

#### Conquest of Lahore

1799

In 1798, Shah Zaman invaded the Punjab for the fourth time. He had to fight hard to capture Lahore. It was during that expedition that the Afghan invader was greatly impressed by the bravery and courage of young Ranjit Singh who, according to Sohan Lal, rushed to the Samman Burj of the Lahore Fort and even killed a large number of Afghans. After the occupation of the city, Shah Zaman again had to return to Kabul on account of the rebellion of his half-brother, Mahmud. While he was, thus returning to Kabul, a large number of his guns were lost owing to sudden floods in the River Jehlum. It is said that Ranjit Singh was promised the grant of the City of Lahore if he salvaged the lost cannon and returned them to the Shah. The young Sukarchakia Chief, thereupon, salvaged 15 cannon and presented them to the Shah. The latter was greatly pleased. A *Khilat* was presented to Ranjit Singh and he was legally authorized to occupy Lahore and rule over the Punjab. However, before that investiture took place, he had already conquered Lahore. Ranjit Singh, with his own troops and those of his mother-in-law, Sada Kaur, attacked Lahore in July 1799. The City of Lahore was at that time held by three Sikh chiefs of the Bhangi Misl, named Chet Singh, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh. When Ranjit Singh reached the neighbourhood of Lahore,

Ranjit Singh  
Got Lahore from  
Zaman

Conquest and  
Occupation of  
Lahore : 1799

he learnt that Chet Singh and his supporters, the Khattris, were not having the co-operation of the Muslim Chaudharis headed by Badr-ud-din. Ranjit Singh and his mother-in-law took full advantage of those dissensions and, thus, without much fighting<sup>1</sup>, occupied the City of Lahore. According to Muhammad Latif, the Lahori Gate of the City was opened to Ranjit Singh by the Muslim Chaudharis and, thus, he easily overpowered all armed resistance. Two out of the three Bhangi Sardars, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh, had fled from the city even before they had heard of Ranjit Singh's entry. Chet Singh, however offered resistance, but eventually surrendered on July 7, 1799.<sup>2</sup>

After the occupation of Lahore, Ranjit Singh was welcomed by the people as a 'deliverer.' He, on his part, issued orders to his soldiers that they should treat all the citizens of Lahore with the greatest consideration. No one was to be attacked or plundered. By another ordinance, he granted protection to all his subjects. He

**Ranjit Singh,  
The 'Deliverer'  
of Lahore**

also encouraged merchants, traders and artisans to resume their work. He even struck coins ; but he did not allow his own name to be inscribed on those coins. He named his coins as 'Nanak Shahi'.

Similarly, on his seals, he did not use his own name but 'Akal Sahai' Thus, with those measures, normal life was restored in Lahore in a very short time and the people hailed the enlightened regime of the young Sukarchakia Chief.

The occupation of Lahore is the first great step in the rising of Ranjit Singh to power. Though it was not the result of any

**Significance of  
the Occupation  
of Lahore**

brilliant military victory, yet its very occupation was a challenge to the neighbouring Sikh Sardars, the Bhangis and the Ramgarhias, and also to the Pathan Chief of Kasur. A powerful coalition was formed

1. According to *Tarikh Sultani*, however, Zaman Shah perceived the growing power of the Sikhs and making a virtue of necessity, appointed Ranjit Singh the Governor of Lahore.

Latif says that a petition was signed by the leading citizens of Lahore including Badr-ud-din, Mohammad Tahir, Mian Ashak Mohammad, Mir Shadi and Bhai Gurbaksh Singh and sent to Ranjit Singh, inviting him to come and save them from the tyrannical regime of the Bhangi Sardars.

2. Sohan Lal says that the people of Lahore, tired of the rule of the Sikh Sardars, sent one Hakim Rai to Ranjit Singh and invited him to occupy Lahore, which he occupied without shedding a drop of blood. Sohan Lal : *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, pp. 41-43.

to oust Ranjit Singh from Lahore. But, as we shall see in the next chapter, all those efforts of the enemies of Ranjit Singh failed and he ultimately came out triumphant.

### **Books For Further Study**

**Sinha :** *Ranjit Singh*

**Griffin :** *Ranjit Singh*

**Latif :** *History of the Punjab*

**Cunningham :** *History of the Sikhs*

**Payne :** *A Short History of the Sikhs*

**Griffin :** *Rajas of the Punjab*

**Sohan Lal Suri :** *Umdut-ut-Tāwarikh*

## CHAPTER XIX

### EARLY CONQUESTS OF RANJIT SINGH

#### 1799-1811

#### **Conquest of the Trans-Satluj Territories of the Sikh Misls**

As already discussed in the foregoing pages, the first important achievement of Ranjit Singh in his career of conquests was the occupation of Lahore. This capital city was held by three Sikh *Sardars*, Chet Singh, Mohar Singh and Sahib Singh. The people of Lahore, tired of the misrule of these Sikh *Sardars*, invited Ranjit Singh who was already planning to attack it. He, therefore, welcomed the invitation and along with the forces of his mother-in-law, Sada Kaur (head of the Kanheya Misl), entered Lahore. No serious resistance was offered to him and on July 7, 1799, he became the master of Lahore.

But the occupation of Lahore roused the jealousy, and intensified the hostility of his rival Sikh *Sardars* and the neighbouring Muslim Chief of Kasur, Nizam-ud-din. Consequently, they formed a powerful confederacy against him under the leadership of the Bhangi *Sardar*, Gulab Singh, of Amritsar. Among the notable chiefs who joined that formidable league were Sahib Singh Bhangi, of Gujrat; Jodh Singh, of Wazirabad; Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, and Nizam-ud-din, the Pathan ruler of Kasur. On hearing all this, Ranjit Singh also made large-scale preparations and even asked his mother-in-law to give him every possible assistance. Thus, with a large force, Ranjit Singh advanced to meet the allied forces which had already left Amritsar and were advancing towards Lahore. At a distance of about twelve miles from Lahore, in the neighbourhood of a small village, Bhasin. Ranjit Singh came face to face with the enemy. But no action was taken for some time, as both the parties over-estimated the strength of each other. Besides, the mutual jealousies of the members of the confederacy stood in the way of adopting a common plan of action against Ranjit Singh. Thus, for two

Conquest and  
Occupation of  
Lahore : 1799

Confederacy  
against Ranjit  
Singh—Battle of  
Bhasin : 1800



months both the forces lay encamped opposite each other. Whereas no regular battle was fought, a few skirmishes took place. Then, all of a sudden, Gulab Singh Bhangi, the leader of the confederacy, died of hard drinking. That incidence caused confusion in the rank and file of Ranjit Singh's enemies. They, therefore, dispersed without accomplishing anything.

This battle of Bhasin is very significant in the career of Ranjit Singh. At the battle-field of Bhasin, his rival Sikh *Sardars* and a powerful neighbouring Muslim chief had pooled their resources, and if their ranks had not been torn asunder by mutual jealousies and internecine quarrels, they would most probably have arrested the progress of Ranjit Singh in spreading his rule in the Punjab. Thereafter, the Sikh chieftains never got a second chance of uniting and overthrowing him.<sup>1</sup>

After the battle of Bhasin, Ranjit Singh turned to his rivals and enemies one by one. Those who were weak, he crushed them with force; but those who were strong, were dealt with diplomatically. Ranjit Singh considered two Sikh Chiefs, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, as his strong rivals. He did not take up arms against them; rather he contracted political friendship with them. For example, in 1801, Ranjit Singh met Fateh Singh Ahluwalia at the sacred place of Taran Taran and there, the two exchanged turbans. After that ceremony, both of them swore on the *Holy Granth* to abide by their solemn pledge of friendship. That friendship was further cemented when Ranjit Singh, after wresting Phagwara from Chaudhari Chuhr Mal in 1802, gave it to Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. Thereafter, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia became one of the great supporters of Ranjit Singh and even accompanied him in some of his dangerous expeditions.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, another serious rival of Ranjit Singh, was more than seventy-five years old and Ranjit Singh did his best to avoid conflict with him. In 1803, Jassa Singh died and was succeeded by Jodh Singh Ramgarhia. Ranjit Singh also contracted friendship with Jodh Singh and, to humour him, he always styled

1. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 14

him as 'Babaji'. It was after Jodh Singh's death that the Ramgarhia possessions were annexed by Ranjit Singh. Similarly, another Sikh chief, Tara Singh Gheba, was quite powerful. But Ranjit Singh did not wage war against him and it was only when he died that Ranjit attacked his possessions and annexed them.

With the remaining Sikh *Sardars* and *Misaldars*, Ranjit Singh, even without provocation, picked quarrels and did not take rest till he had annexed their territories. After the **Conquest of Akalgarh and Gujrat** battle of Bhasin, the first two victims of Ranjit Singh's aggression were Sahib Singh Bhangi, of Gujrat and Dul Singh, of Akalgarh. Sahib Singh was charged with joining the confederacy of 1801 and consequently his territory was invaded. Dul Singh of Akalgarh joined Sahib Singh. A brief battle was fought at Akalgarh. The result was that Dul Singh was taken prisoner and Akalgarh was annexed. Sahib Singh Bhangi, however, escaped and retained his estate for several years. It was in 1809 that he was finally defeated by Fakir Aziz-ud-din and his stronghold, Gujrat, was annexed. Nur-ud-din, the younger brother of Faqir Aziz-ud-din, was appointed the first Governor of Gujrat.

In 1805<sup>1</sup>, Ranjit Singh decided to conquer Amritsar which was held by Mai Sukhan, the widow of Gulab Singh, and her minor son, Gurdit Singh. He, therefore, sent a message to Mai Sukhan to surrender the Fort of Lohgarh, the Bhangi fort at Amritsar and also hand over to him the great Bhangi gun, Zamzama. Mai Sukhan refused to meet those demands and, consequently, Ranjit Singh marched on Amritsar and besieged Lohgarh. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia also fought on the side of Ranjit Singh in that campaign. The battle lasted for a few days and in the end, Mai Sukhan and Gurdit Singh fled and took refuge in the 'Haveli' of Jodh Singh Ramgarhia. Later on, they submitted and Ranjit Singh annexed Amritsar and other Bhangi dependencies in the neighbourhood. He, however, allotted a small *Jagir* for the maintenance of Mai Sukhan and her minor son.

1. According to Cunningham, Griffin and Latif, the attack on Amritsar was made in 1802. But Sohan Lal, the court diarist of Ranjit Singh, says that Amritsar was attacked and conquered in 1805.

The occupation of Amritsar is as significant in the career of Ranjit Singh as the conquest of Lahore. With the possession of

**Significance of the Occupation of Amritsar** Lahore, Ranjit Singh had become the master of the political capital of the Punjab and with the annexation of Amritsar he became the master of

"the religious capital of the Sikhs". With Lahore and Amritsar as parts of his dominions, Ranjit Singh was no longer *primus inter pares* among the Misaldars but had attained a status and position far superior to theirs. Ranjit Singh did not take arms against the Dallewala Misl so long as its brave leader,

**Conquest of Dallewala Possessions, Battle of Rahon : 1807—** Tara Singh Gheba, was alive. In 1807, Tara Singh died. Immediately on hearing of it, Ranjit Singh attacked his territory and after a feeble resistance

which his widow offered at Rahon, the Dallewala possessions were annexed. M. Latif describes the event in the following words :

"While the body of the old Sardar (Tara Singh) was on the pyre and the...obsequies were being performed, a detachment of Ranjit Singh's troops which had been informed of the event, appeared suddenly and demanded the deceased's treasures and estates. The widow of the aged head of the Dallewallas was, however, a spirited woman. She girded up her garments and appeared, sword in hand, in the battlefield; but the bastion walls of Rahon soon gave away and the place became the prize of the invader."

**Conquest of Karorsinghia Territory** Similarly, Ranjit Singh attacked the territory of Karorsinghias or Panjgarhias and defeated their leader Bhagat Singh, and annexed their possessions in 1810.

**Conquest of Faizalpuria Territory : September 1811** There was another Misl, Faizalpuria or Singhpuria, which held possessions on both sides of the Satluj. Its chief, Budh Singh, was called upon by Ranjit Singh to offer submission. On his refusal, a big force under Diwan Mohkam Chand was sent against him. Jodh Singh Ramgarhia and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia accompanied the veteran general. In September 1811, Ranjit's forces easily captured Jullundhar and Phillaur, but Budh Singh crossed the Satluj and took refuge in his possessions lying to the south of the river. Ranjit, however, annexed all his territories lying to the north of the Satluj, viz. Jullundur Doab, Fatehpur and Patti.

## II

**Conquest of Cis-Satluj (Malwa) Territories**

Ranjit Singh's conquests, however, were not confined to the north and the west of the River Satluj. His greatest wish was to unite the whole Sikh nation under his own banner and in order to achieve it, he decided to conquer the territory lying to the south of the Satluj, which is also called the 'Malwa' tract of the Punjab. The greater part of that area was held by the chiefs of the Phulkian Family. The foremost Phulkian chief was the ruler of Patiala. But the Patiala State, at the time of Ranjit's accession to power, was held by a weak and incompetent ruler, Sahib Singh. He was having a serious quarrel with his own wife, Rani Aus Kaur. The other Phulkian chiefs of Nabha and Jind, taking advantage of that quarrel, had begun to make encroachments upon the territory of Sahib Singh.

In 1806, a serious quarrel broke out over the possession of a small town, Daladhi, between the Patiala chief and the Nabha ruler ; and the latter along with Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, sought the help of Ranjit Singh. The Lahore chief was already waiting for an opportunity to cross the Satluj and extend his influence and territory in the Malwa region. Accordingly, in 1806, he entered the territory with 20,000 men. He had in his train even Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Gurdit Singh of Ladwa. Within a very short time, Ranjit Singh captured Daladhi, advanced to Patiala and exacted a heavy tribute from Sahib Singh.

**First Malwa  
(Cis-Satluj) expe-  
dition, 1806**

On his way back, Ranjit Singh conquered Ludhiana<sup>1</sup>, Dakha, Raikot, Jagraon and Ghungrana. But he did not annex those territories to his own dominions and distributed them among chiefs who had accompanied him in that expedition.

In 1807, Ranjit Singh was again invited to proceed to Patiala when, however, the invitation came not from one of the rival Chiefs of the Raja of Patiala but from his own wife, Rani Aus Kaur. The Rani was an artful and ambitious woman and wanted her husband, Sahib Singh, to grant a large tract of territory to her infant son, Kunwar Karam Singh. But the Raja considered that demand to be quite unreasonable and, therefore, did not yield to

1. Ludhiana was then held by Nur-un-Nisa and Lachhmi.



her wishes. Consequently, she wrote to Ranjit Singh to help her and, in return, she promised to give him a necklace of rare diamonds and a well-known piece of brass cannon, Kara Khan. The Lahore Chief readily accepted the invitation and crossed the Satluj for the second time. This time, he was accompanied by two great veterans—Diwan Mohkam Chand and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. No resistance was offered to him and when Ranjit

Second Malwa

(Cis-Satluj)

Expedition : 1807

Singh entered Patiala, a rousing reception was given to him. He restored cordiality between Raja Sahib Singh and Aus Kaur and persuaded the Raja to grant a *jagir* of Rs. 50,000 to their infant son, as demanded by her. As a reward for those services, Ranjit Singh got the promised gun Kara Khan and the diamond necklace.

But Ranjit Singh had not gone to Patiala simply to settle a dispute between the Raja and the Rani. His real motive was to extend the boundaries of his kingdom to the south of the Satluj. So from Patiala he proceeded to Ambala and got a huge *nazrana* from its ruler. He captured Naraingarh also, and exacted tributes from Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, Jodh Singh of Kalsia and other Sikh *Sardars* of that region. It was also during the second cis-Satluj expedition that Ranjit Singh conquered Wadni, Zira and Kot-Kapura and received tributes from the chiefs of Mani-Majra and Ropar. In December 1807, he returned to Lahore.

The second expedition of Ranjit Singh created great alarm among the Sikh chiefs of Malwa. Consequently, in March 1808, some of them approached Mr Seton, the British Resident, for protection. But Seton, at that time, hesitated to make any definite commitments and, thus, the Sikh Chiefs were greatly disappointed. It was only when these Sikh Chiefs could not get any assurance of protection from the British Resident at Delhi that they turned to Ranjit Singh for subordinate alliances. Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala exchanged his turban with Ranjit Singh and both swore to remain friendly to each other. The other Sikh chiefs of Malwa also agreed to acknowledge the suzerainty of Ranjit Singh. Thus, when the British Government sent Sir Charles Metcalfe to sign a treaty with the Lahore Chief, the former saw most of the cis-Satluj Sikh chiefs in attendance at the latter's court. Metcalf insisted that Ranjit Singh should relinquish all his claims on the territory south of the River Satluj. But that was something contrary to the most cherished aim of Ranjit Singh's life, i.e. to

become the ruler of the entire Sikh nation. Negotiations were, therefore, prolonged; and even during the period of negotiations,

**Metcalfe at the Court of Ranjit Singh** Ranjit Singh attacked Faridkot and Malerkotla and conquered them. But the British were determined not to let Ranjit Singh extend his boundaries beyond the Satluj and, in order to frighten him, they sent a force under Ochterlony to Ludhiana to make a show of arms and, thus, coerce Ranjit Singh to accept the Satluj as the boundary of his kingdom.

Ranjit did not want to yield and he even made preparations for war, but in the end felt that his infant State could not fight successfully against the mighty British power; and consequently, signed the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809. But he agreed to confine his activities of war and conquest to the territories lying to the north-west of the River Satluj.

As described elsewhere, the greatest desire of Ranjit Singh was to become the ruler of the whole Sikh nation. In order to achieve it, he had contracted friendship with those who could give him a tough fight, and subdued by force those who were weak. This policy of Ranjit Singh towards the Misls has been summed up by Latif in the following words :—

**Review of Ranjit Singh's Policy towards the Sikh Misls** The old Sikh confederacies had either all been swept away by his systematic usurpations and grasping policy, or, like the Phulkiyans and the Nihangs, they had sought the protection of a power greater than his by settling east of the Satluj. The Kanheyia, Ramgarhia and Ahluwalia Misls ranged themselves under his banner and took pride in following him to the battlefield.”

Ranjit Singh also abolished in 1805 the Sarbat Khalsa institution of Gurmata. The Gurmata Assembly was the central diet of the Sikh Misls and used to meet at Akal Takht (Amritsar) to formulate a common policy or draw a common plan of action against their common enemies who were generally the Muslim Governors and Afghan invaders. So long as the institution of Gurmata existed, all the Sikh *Sardars* of the Misls considered themselves to be equal and asserted equality at the annual meetings of the Gurmata Assembly, but

**Absorption of the territory of Sikh Misls through force and diplomacy**

**Abolition of Gurmata : 1805**

with the abolition of that institution, the Sikh *Sardars* ceased to meet together and, consequently, they were deprived of all opportunities to claim and insist on equality with one another. Thus, Ranjit Singh, after the abolition of the Gurmata institution, resumed the role of the chief of the entire Sikh community.

This policy of Ranjit Singh towards the Misls, particularly towards those which were weak, has been described as aggressive and unscrupulous. When he wanted to attack a Misl, he would not even wait to find out a pretext in order to justify his aggression. Most of his wars against the Misls were fought without any provocation and without even any justification. Tara Singh Gheba had died and his body had not yet been burnt when Ranjit Singh invaded his territory and annexed it. Similarly, his wars against the Bhangis, the Faizalpurias and the Karorsinghias were fought without any provocation given by them. Latif, writing about the policy of Ranjit Singh regarding his wars against the Misls, says, "With him (Ranjit Singh) the weak were sure to go to the wall and their ruin was the foundation upon which was built his greatness."<sup>1</sup> Thus, while fighting against the weak, Ranjit Singh was not moved by any feelings of pity or compassion; rather, he held, like Bismarck that "bursts of sentiments are out of place in politics."

Even with the powerful Sikh Misaldars with whom Ranjit Singh had contracted friendship, he was not sincere. By entering into friendship with them, he was simply gaining time to attack and annex their possessions at some convenient time. His treatment of Sada Kaur, head of the Kanheya Misl, who is generally described as the ladder by which Ranjit Singh rose to power, bears out clearly how aggressive and unscrupulous Ranjit Singh was while dealing with the Sikh Misls. In 1821, all her possessions, except Wadni, were annexed. Similarly, as soon as Jodh Singh, the Ramgarhia Sardar, died in 1816, his possessions were annexed. Sinha has rightly remarked, "No tie of kinship, no sentiment of gratitude was strong enough to stand in his way"<sup>2</sup> i.e. in absorbing the territories of the Sikh Misls.

Most of the Sardars, even those who were friendly with the Lahore Chief, had realized during their life time the aggressive

1. Latif : *History of the Punjab*, p. 365

2. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 65

intentions of Ranjit Singh. The following incident clearly illustrates this fact. Once, Ranjit Singh wanted to give some presents to the Ramgarhia Sardar, Baba Jodh Singh, but the latter declined and said, "A man is fortunate in these times, if he is allowed to retain his turban on his own head." The only Sardar who escaped his aggression was Fateh Singh, the leader of the Ahluwalia Misl.

But it must be remembered that Ranjit Singh's policy of consolidation of the territories wrested from the Sikh Sardars was highly successful. The Sikh chiefs, whom he dis-  
 On the whole successful possessed, found to their satisfaction that their conqueror was generous and forgiving. Whenever he annexed the territories of a *Sardar*, he would offer him a handsome *jagir* for his maintenance, if, of course, he was willing to serve under him. Gurdit Singh Bhangi, Sahib Singh of Gujrat and a number of other Sikh *Sardars* who agreed to acknowledge Ranjit Singh's suzerainty, were given good *jagirs* and so within a short time, they reconciled themselves to the new situation. Similarly, those soldiers who were in the service of the Sikh Misaldars were recruited by Ranjit Singh in his irregular cavalry the "Ghorcharas" and, thus, ceased to be a source of trouble to him any longer.

### III

#### Minor Conquests : Kasur and Kangra

Besides waging war against his rival Sikh Chiefs, Ranjit Singh also conquered the possessions of those Muslim chiefs who held territory in the Punjab. In the neighbourhood of  
 Conquest of Kasur : 1807 Lahore, there was the Pathan colony of Kasur. When Ranjit Singh occupied Lahore, the Pathan chief of Kasur named Nizam-ud-din, alongwith the Bhangi and the Ramgarhia Sardars, formed a coalition against him. But, as noted earlier, the members of the coalition did not co-operate with one another and Ranjit Singh won a bloodless victory. From 1801 to 1806, a number of expeditions were sent against Nizam-ud-din and tributes were exacted from him. In 1801, the Pathan chief died and was succeeded by his brother Qutub-ud-din. The new chief tried to recover his independence and negotiated a secret treaty with Nawab Muzaffar Khan of Multan against Ranjit Singh. But Ranjit Singh soon came to know of the intrigues of Qutub-ud-Din and, consequently, in February 1807, sent an expedition



against him. Kasur was besieged and, it is said, the Pathan offered a tough resistance. The siege continued for about a month, but, in the end, Qutub-ud-din surrendered. All his possessions were annexed; but for his maintenance, Ranjit Singh granted him the *jagir* of Mamdot.<sup>1</sup> On his return from Kasur, Ranjit Singh celebrated his victory by holding feasts and prayers. The cities of Lahore and Amritsar were illuminated.

Besides the Pathans of Kasur, there were a number of turbulent Muslim tribes inhabiting the territory to the west of the Ravi, the Chenab and the Jehlum. The most important among them were the Kharals and the Sials. In 1803, Ranjit Singh attacked the territory of Kharals in the neighbourhood of modern Sheikhpura and Jhang and reduced them to submission. In the same year, he sent a message to the Sial Chief, Ahmad Khan of Jhang and Chiniot, to submit to him. But Ahmad Khan did not send a favourable reply. Thereupon, Ranjit Singh marched against him and defeated him. Ahmad Khan purchased his safety by paying a heavy tribute of Rs. 60,000. It was during that

**Wars against  
Kharalas and  
Sials**

expedition that Ranjit Singh exacted tributes from the Muslim chiefs of Sahiwal and Garh Maharaja also. In 1805, another expedition was sent against Ahmad Khan Sial and the amount of the tribute

was raised to Rs, 1,20,000. Two years latter, Ranjit Singh learnt that Ahmad Khan had made a secret alliance against him with Nawab Muzaffar Khan; and, consequently, he sent another

**Conquest of  
Jhang : 1807**

expedition against Ahmad Khan. He was defeated and his possessions, comprising Jhang and Chiniot, were occupied by the Sikh ruler. Later on, a *Jagir* was bestowed on Ahmad Khan. It was also in 1807

that he forced Nawab Bahawal Khan to recognize him as his overlord and pay an annual tribute to him. In 1808, the tribute was also exacted from another Muslim chieftain, Alam Khan, the Governor of Akhnur.

Another important conquest of Ranjit Singh effected in the first decade of the nineteenth century was that of Kangra. There were a number of hill States in the Punjab, but the most powerful of them at that time was Kangra, which was then held by Raja Sansar Chand Katoch. He was as ambitious as Ranjit Singh and

1. He was, however, required to supply 100 horsemen to Ranjit Singh.

wanted to establish his ascendancy over the whole of 'the Kohistan in 1804, he advanced and tried to capture Hoshiarpur and Bajwara, but the Lahore Chief inflicted a crushing defeat on him. Thereafter, Sansar Chand tried to extend his dominions at the expense of the small neighbouring hill States. Thereupon, one of the hill chiefs, Raja of Kahlur, sought the protection of the Gurkhas of Nepal. The Gurkhas under Amar Singh Thapa were already entertaining designs to occupy the Hill States of the Punjab and so they readily responded to the invitation of the Kahlur Chief. Kangra was besieged by them. Sansar Chand soon realized that it would be difficult for him to defend his possessions single-handed and, consequently, he sought Ranjit Singh's assistance. But the Lahore Chief demanded the Fort of Kangra as the price for the help to be rendered. Sansar Chand, thus, found himself between the devil and the deep sea. The price demanded by Ranjit Singh was too heavy to pay and so, for some time, he continued offering resistance without any external help. But at last the pressure of the Gurkhas proved too strong for him to bear and he again approached Ranjit Singh for help and even agreed to pay the price that was demanded. Consequently, Ranjit Singh sent a large force under Diwan Mohkam Chand. The Gurkha General, Amar Singh, on learning of the arrival of this Sikh force, retreated. After the withdrawal of the Gurkhas, Ranjit Singh established his ascendancy over the hill possessions of Sansar Chand Katoch. In 1829, those possessions were finally annexed.

**Conquest of  
Kangara : 1809**

#### **Books for Further Study**

1. Sohan Lal : *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*
2. Kanhya Lal : *Tarikh-i-Punjab*
3. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
4. Lepel Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*
5. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*
6. Cunningham : *History of the Sikhs*
7. Payne : *A Short History of the Sikhs*
8. Griffin : *Rajas of the Punjab*

## CHAPTER XX

### CONQUEST OF MULTAN, KASHMIR, PESHAWAR AND DERAJAT

1811—1834

#### I

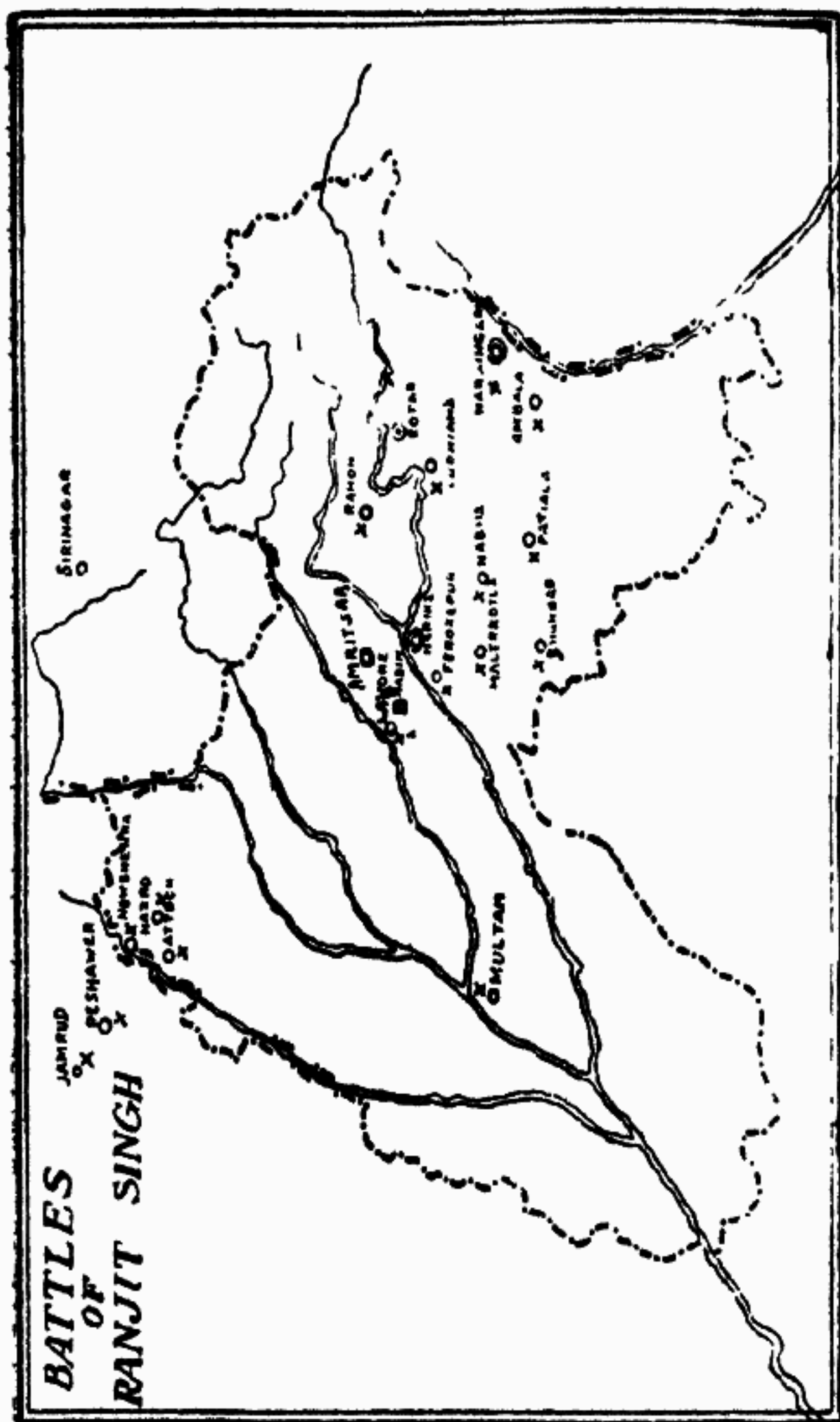
#### Conquest of Multan

Multan was an important town, both from the commercial and the strategic points of view, and was, in the Mughal days, the headquarters of a province of that name. During the period of the decline of the Mughal Empire, it was conquered by the Afghans. But in 1771, the Bhangi Sardars captured it and held it for about a decade. In 1779, Timur Shah, the successor of Ahmad Shah Abdali, ousted the Bhangi Sardars and appointed one of his kinsmen—Muzaffar Khan Sadozai—the Governor of Multan. Thus, when Ranjit Singh came to power, Multan was held by Nawab Muzaffar Khan of the Sadozai clan, technically a dependent of the Afghan ruler, but practically independent of all external control.

In 1802, Ranjit Singh led his first expedition against Multan. When the Sikh forces entered the Nawab's territory, he sent his agents to the Sikh Chief with a message that he was ready to pay a huge *nazrana* to him. Accordingly, the Maharaja met the Nawab at a place, about 30 miles distant from the city, and, after exacting a large tribute from him, returned to Lahore.

In 1805, the Maharaja led another expedition against Multan and at that time he was able to advance as far as Mahatma, a village about 20 miles to the north. But while he was, thus, advancing towards Multan, he had to return to his headquarters, because he learnt that Jaswant Rao Holkar, a Maratha chieftain, being hotly pursued by the British Army under Lake, was approaching his eastern frontier. He, therefore, hastily concluded terms with Nawab Muzaffar and returned to Amritsar.

In 1807, Ranjit Singh learnt that Nawab Muzaffar Khan





was intriguing against him in league with Ahmad Khan Sial of Jhang, and Qutab-ud-din Khan of Kasur. Accordingly, he led

**Third Expedition:** his third expedition against Multan and within a short time occupied a major portion of the Nawab's territories. He even entered the suburbs of Multan, but failed to capture the citadel. He, however, exacted a tribute of Rs. 70,000 from the Nawab and returned.

In 1810, Ranjit Singh sent a large force under his great general Diwan Mohkam Chand to conquer Multan. The Sikhs easily occupied the town and then besieged the citadel. But the Muslim forces of the Nawab offered a gallant resistance.

**Fourth Expedition :** It is said that during that siege, even the famous Bhangi gun 'Zamzama' was brought all the way from Lahore to batter down the walls of the citadel, but all those efforts failed to intimidate the besieged and after two months of bloody warfare, Ranjit Singh made terms with the Nawab and raised the siege. The Nawab, however, agreed to pay a tribute of two and a half lakhs of rupees and also to furnish a quota of troops.

According to Lepel Griffin, both Ranjit Singh and Nawab Muzaffar Khan approached the British for help ; but the Governor-General told their agents that Multan was "remote and beyond the sphere they then desired to influence."<sup>1</sup>

In 1816 and 1817, again attempts were made to conquer Multan and in those campaigns one of the Sikh Generals, Akali Phula Singh, even gained possession of some of the outskirts of the citadel ; but up to 1818, Multan retained its independence.

**Fifth expedition :** In the winter of 1817-18, Ranjit Singh made huge preparations for the final conquest of Multan. On January 14, 1818, a large force, numbering about 25,000 men<sup>2</sup> under the nominal leadership of prince Kharak Singh,<sup>3</sup> but in reality commanded by Misr Diwan Chand, set out from Lahore to conquer Multan. After capturing

**Sixth Expedition and the Final Conquest of Multan :** 1818

1. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*

2. Griffin says that the strength of Ranjit Singh's forces at that time was 18,000

3. Ganesh Dass in his *Fateh Nama Guru Khalsaji Ka* says that Maharaja Ranjit Singh's wife, Datar Kaur, also accompanied Kharak Singh and actually took part in conducting the military operations against the Nawab.

Khangarh and Muzaffarabad, the Lahore forces advanced and occupied the City of Multan. Nawab Muzaffar Khan shut himself up in the citadel and gave a determined fight to the Sikhs. It is said that the fighting was so balanced that both the Sikhs and the Pathans had to invoke the help of God for victory. The former prayed to Guru Gobind Singh for victory, whereas the latter offered prayers at the tomb of Shams Tabriz for their success in repulsing the Sikh attack. Ganesh Dass, a contemporaneous Panjabi poet and author of *Fateh Nama Guru Khalsa ji ka* even gives an imaginary conversation between Shams Tabriz and Guru Gobind Singh, in which the latter finally predicts the victory of his votaries.<sup>1</sup> Anyhow, the Nawab and his men made a defence so gallant as the Sikhs had never witnessed before. Mir Diwan Chand employed the famous gun 'Zamzama' in battering the walls of the fort. The 'Nihangs' or Akalis, led by Akali Sadhu Singh, showed unique valour in that campaign. Despite all the efforts, the Afghans successfully resisted the Sikh attack. Ganesh Dass says that while the battle was raging, the Sikhs sent a message to Muzaffar Khan to surrender the fort in return for a liberal *jagir*; but the latter refused saying that it was against the national honour and tradition of the Afghans to submit to an alien ruler.<sup>2</sup> He continued fighting, till he died. Sir Lepel Griffin describes the last scene of the Multan campaign in the following words.<sup>3</sup>

**Last Scene of the  
Multan Cam-  
paign**

taking the Afghans by surprise, captured it. The Sikh forces, seeing this success advanced to assault and mounted the breach at Khizari Gate. Here, the old Nawab, with his eight sons and all that remained of his garrison, stood sword in hand, resolved to fight to death. So many fell beneath the keen Afghan swords that the Sikhs drew back and opened fire on the little party with their matchlocks. "Come on like men" shouted the Afghans, "and let us fall in fair fight"; but this was an invitation which the Sikhs did not care to accept. There died the white-bearded Muzaffar, scorning to accept quarters, and five of his sons. A sixth was wounded

1. S.R. Kohli : *Fateh Nama Guru Khalsaji Ka* by Ganesh Dass, p. 64

2. *Ibid.*, p. 61

3. See Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 187

severely in the face and two accepted quarter and were saved. Few of the garrison escaped with their lives and the whole city was given up to plunder." The fort of Multan thus fell into the hands of Ranjit Singh on Monday, the first day of June, 1818.<sup>1</sup>

Thereafter, Prince Kharak Singh made his triumphant entry into the city and seized all the property and treasures of Muzaffar Khan. Then, the Sikh army advanced and captured the Fort of Shujabad. Ranjit Singh celebrated the victory by sending rich offerings to the Darbar Sahib at Amritsar. The towns of Lahore and Amritsar were illuminated, and, for a number of days, great festivities were held. The victor of Multan, Mir Dewan Chand, was given rich presents, and the title of *Zaffar Jang* was conferred on him.

Regarding the settlement of the newly conquered territories, Ranjit Singh made the following arrangements. The civil administration was entrusted to Sukh Dayal and the military administration to Babu Baj Singh. Jamaradar Khushal Singh was appointed the head of the Police; and *thanas* or police-posts were established at Khangarh, Ahmadpur, Rangpur and Talumba. The two surviving sons of the late Nawab Muzaffar Khan—Sarfaraz Khan and Zulfikar Khan—were granted *jagirs* for their maintenance<sup>2</sup>

The conquest of Multan greatly enhanced the prestige of Ranjit Singh. It was the second great victory won over the Afghans, the first being won five years earlier when Fateh Khan Barkazai was defeated at Hazro. Besides, the occupation of Multan created a wedge between the Muslim territories of Bhawalpur and those along the southern course of the Indus and, thus, removed the possible danger of their combination. The annexation of Multan also increased the revenue resources of the Lahore ruler, because that newly conquered area yielded an annual income of Rs. 6,80,975.<sup>3</sup>

## II

### Conquest of Attock, Kashmir and Derajat

The conquest and annexation of Kashmir followed close on that of Multan. The beautiful Kashmir Valley had been, for

1. The date is given by Ganesh Dass in *Fateh Nama Guru Khalsaji Ka*.

2. Latif : *History of the Punjab*, p. 413

3. *Khalsa Darbar Records*, Vol. II, p. 76

**Kashmir under  
Atta Mohammad** several countries the prize of great conquerors who valued it because of its loveliness and salubrious climate. Up to the fifties of the eighteenth century, this rich valley formed a part of the Mughal Empire. But in 1752, it was captured by Ahmad Shah Abdali and since then was held by an Afghan governor. In the beginning of the nineteenth century when Ranjit Singh was seriously thinking of conquering Kashmir, it was held by Atta Muhammad Khan 'Khail'. In 1811, Ranjit Singh took his first step towards the conquest of Kashmir when he attacked and conquered Bhimbar and Rajouri.

In November 1812, Wazir Fateh Khan of Kabul sent Godar Mal as his envoy to the court of Ranjit Singh. He was anxious to conquer Kashmir but was not quite sure of the Sikh ruler's reaction to that move. Godar Mal was cordially received at Lahore by Ranjit Singh and he carried back from the Maharaja an assurance of help for his master. Immediately thereafter, a meeting took place between the two chiefs at Rohtas where, on the following terms, it was decided to make a joint attack on Kashmir.

1. The Maharaja would be entitled to fifty per cent of the entire booty to be gained from the Valley.
2. Fateh Khan would pay nine lacs of rupees annually to the Maharaja out of the revenues of Kashmir. However, it soon became clear that each wanted to outmanoeuvre the other. The Afghan force was led personally by the Wazir, while the Sikh troops were under the command of Dewan Mohkam Chand. When the two reached Pir Panchal, Fateh Khan played a trick on Mohkam Chand and went far ahead of him. But the Sikh Commander was not to be outwitted easily. He took a different route and managed to enter the Valley simultaneously with the Afghans. The joint operation was quite successful and Nawab Atta Muhammad, the ruler of Kashmir, fled.

After the conquest of Kashmir, Fateh Khan refused to share the spoils with Ranjit Singh. However, Dewan Mohkam Chand had succeeded in getting hold of Shah Shujah, an ex-king of Kabul and in bringing him to Lahore, where the Maharaja got from him the precious Koh-i-Noor in lieu of the help rendered. But Ranjit Singh still felt that he had been outmanoeuvred by the wily Fateh Khan in the joint invasion of the Kashmir Valley. He, therefore,



wanted to retrieve his prestige and that object he achieved by the conquest of Attock. The Fort of Attock was held by Atta Mohammad's brother Jahan Dad Khan. After the defeat of his brother in Kashmir, Jahan Dad Khan grew apprehensive of his own position. He could easily see that he would be the next victim of Fateh Khan Barakzai's aggression. Ranjit Singh took advantage of his apprehensions and, consequently, sent Faqir Aziz-ud-din to persuade Jahan Dad Khan to hand over the fort in exchange for a rich *Jagir*. Jahan Dad agreed and, thus, without any fighting, the Sikhs occupied Attock.

But when the news of the occupation of Attock reached Fateh Khan in Kashmir, he was greatly upset. He left his brother Azim Khan in Kashmir and himself descended to wrest Attock from the hands of the Sikhs. He also sent messages to the Afghans of Hazara and Chachh to join him in the holy war or *jehad* against the Sikhs. To meet Fateh Khan's challenge, Ranjit Singh sent some of his best generals, namely Jodh Singh Ramgarhia, Hari Singh Nalwa and Dewan Mohkam Chand to defend Attock. That campaign led to the famous battle of Chhachh. The Afghans, after some initial successes, suffered a crushing defeat. About 2,000 Afghans lost their lives. Fateh Khan then retreated and repaired to Kabul.

The victory of Chhachh is an important landmark in Ranjit Singh's career of conquest. It was the first pitched battle fought between the Afghans and the Sikhs; and the victory in the battle not only placed Attock, a commanding fort on the Indus, in their hands but also greatly helped the future course of the expansion of Sikh dominion, in the north-western region of the Punjab. It increased the confidence of the Sikh soldiers and thereafter they became bolder in their attacks on the Afghan territory.

Encouraged by his success in the battle of Chhachh, Ranjit Singh decided to send an expedition to Kashmir to conquer it single-handed. Accordingly, early in 1814, the Maharaja collected a large army and under the command of Dewan Ram Dayal sent it for the conquest of Kashmir. The Maharaja himself moved up to reinforce and guide Ram Dayal, but the second expedition resulted in great disaster. Azim Khan, the new Afghan Governor of Kashmir and brother of Fateh Khan, inflicted a crushing defeat on the Lahore

**Battle of Hazro (1813) and the Defeat of Fateh Khan**

**Significance of Hazro**

**Second Kashmir Expedition : 1814**

forces. During their retreat, they further suffered heavy losses. Some of the important Sikh *Sardars*, viz. Fateh Singh Chhachhi, Desa Singh Man and Gurbaksh Singh, were killed in that expedition.

After that disaster, Ranjit Singh postponed the conquest of Kashmir for a few years. Since 1818, the conquest of Multan had greatly raised the morale of the Sikh forces.

**Third Expedition  
(1819). Final Conq-  
uest of Kashmir.  
Battle of Supin**

Consequently, the Maharaja had begun making preparations for another invasion of Kashmir. In May 1819, a large force under Prince Kharak Singh and Misr Diwan Chand, the victors of Multan, set out to conquer Kashmir. Within a very short time, they occupied the Bahram Galla Pass and thence moved to the Pir Panjal and crossed it. Jabbar Khan, the new Governor of Kashmir who had taken the place of Azim Khan, advanced to meet the Sikh Army. A severe fighting took place between the two armies on the plains of Supin or Sopayan.

The Afghans under Jabbar Khan offered a gallant defence, but eventually they were forced to leave the field owing to the superior tactics of the Lahore General, Misr Dewan chand. A number of leading Afghan generals, such as Mihr Dil Khan and Samad Khan, were killed. Jabbar Khan himself had a narrow escape.

On the 14th of July, the Sikh forces occupied Srinagar. Ranjit Singh offered large sums of money in charity to celebrate that victory. Misr Diwan Chand, the victor, was given an additional title of 'Fateh-o-Nusrat Nasib', i.e. one who is destined to win<sup>1</sup>. Regarding the administration of Kashmir, Ranjit Singh appointed Moti Ram<sup>2</sup> its first Governor. Pandit Bir Dhar and Jawahar Mal were sent along with him to assist him in financial matters.

After the conquest of Kashmir, Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered the mid-Indus region, i.e. the Derajat—Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Gazi Khan. In 1820 he sent Jamadar Khushal Singh to conquer Dera Ghazi Khan. Its Afghan Governor, Zaman Khan, was expelled and Dera Ghazi Khan was handed over to the Nawab of Bahawalpur in return for a heavy annual rent.

**Conquest of  
Dera Ghazi  
Khan : 1820**

1. See Sohan Lal, *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, Vol. II, p. 261

2. Diwan Moti Ram was the son of Diwan Mohkam Chand.

In 1821, the Maharaja marched against the Nawab of Mankera, Hazi Ahmad Khan, who also held Dera Ismail Khan, Tonk, Bannu, Leiah and Kundian. Mankera was besieged. The Afghans put up a splendid fight, but after a short struggle gave way before superior numbers.

Mankera, Dera  
Ismail Khan and  
Bannu

### III

#### Conquest of Peshawar

But the most important conquest of Ranjit Singh was the acquisition of Peshawar. The town of Peshawar was comparatively easy of access from Kabul and so it could always count upon timely aid from it in the event of an attack by the Maharaja of Lahore. Nevertheless the Sikh Chief, on account of the strategic value of Peshawar, was determined to conquer it.

In 1818, he learnt that anarchy had set in Kabul. Prince Kamran, son of Mahmud Shah, the Ruler of Kabul, tired of the influence of the Barakzai Brothers, had killed their leader Fateh Khan Barakzai. That incident created a great stir in the north-west India where some of Fateh Khan's brothers were holding key positions.

First Invasion  
of Peshawar :  
November 1818

Ranjit Singh took advantage of the internal troubles of the Afghans and sent an expedition to Peshawar. The Afghan Governors of Pashwar, Sultan Yar Mohammad and Dost Mohammad, evacuated the town as the Sikh troops entered the territory of Peshawar. Ranjit Singh then occupied the town and stayed there for four days. During that short stay, he received about Rs. 25,000 as *Nazrana*. The shrewd Maharaja, however, felt that he was not yet strong enough to maintain his authority beyond the Indus and, consequently, gave Peshawar to his old ally, Jahan Dad Khad, ex-Governor of Attock and he himself returned to Lahore.

But Jahan Dad Khan could not remain in Peshawar for long. When Dost Mohammad Khan and Yar Mohammad Khan learnt that the Sikh forces had retired, they marched on Peshawar, drove out Jahan Dad and re-established their authority. Ranjit Singh, thereupon, sent a force against them ; but before any action could be taken, they offered their submission and sent rich presents to the value of Rs. 50,000. Thus, they pacified the Maharaja.

In 1822, Mohammad Azim Khan, the Wazir of Kabul, decided

to re-establish his authority over Peshawar ; and, consequently, with a large force, he set out to conquer Peshawar and by the end of January succeeded in occupying it.

Next, Mohammad Azim called upon the Afghans of Peshawar and Attock to unite under his banner and wage a *jehad* or holy war against the Sikhs and recover all the Afghan territory. Ranjit Singh, on learning those designs, raised a huge force and even appealed to the Akalis to join him against this danger from the Afghans. Thus, as Sinha says, "the fanaticism of the Ghazis was pitted against the fanaticism of the Akalis". The Maharaja himself moved to the scene to conduct the campaign personally. First, the Sikh forces defeated the Afghans at Jahangira. But the most important battle of that campaign was fought at Nowshera or Tibba Tehri.<sup>1</sup> According to Ganesh Dass, the Afghans fought so gallantly that the Sikhs once lost heart, and one of their great Akali generals, Phula Singh, was killed. If, at that time, Ranjit Singh had not personally rushed into the battlefield, the Sikhs might have lost the day. When Ranjit Singh took the command in his own hands, he told his Sikh soldiers that 'Lahore was distant and a retreat would be fatal to them.' Those words and the presence of the Maharaja in their midst revived the drooping courage of the Sikh soldiers and, consequently, they fought so desperately that the Ghazis (Afghans) fled precipitately, leaving the field to the Sikhs. The Maharaja then marched to Peshawar and made a triumphant entry into the city on 16th March, 1823. This victory greatly enhanced the prestige of Ranjit Singh. But still he did not consider it wise to annex Peshawar and administer it directly. He gave it to Yar Mohammad Khan in return for an annual tribute of Rs. 1,10,000 and he himself returned to Lahore.

Different reasons have been given for this victory of Tibba Tehri. Munshi Mohan Lal and William Kaye hold that he won it solely by bribery. He bribed Sultan Mohammad Khan and his brother and even Dost Mohammad. Ganesh Das says that the victory was won mainly

**Causes of Sikh Victory**

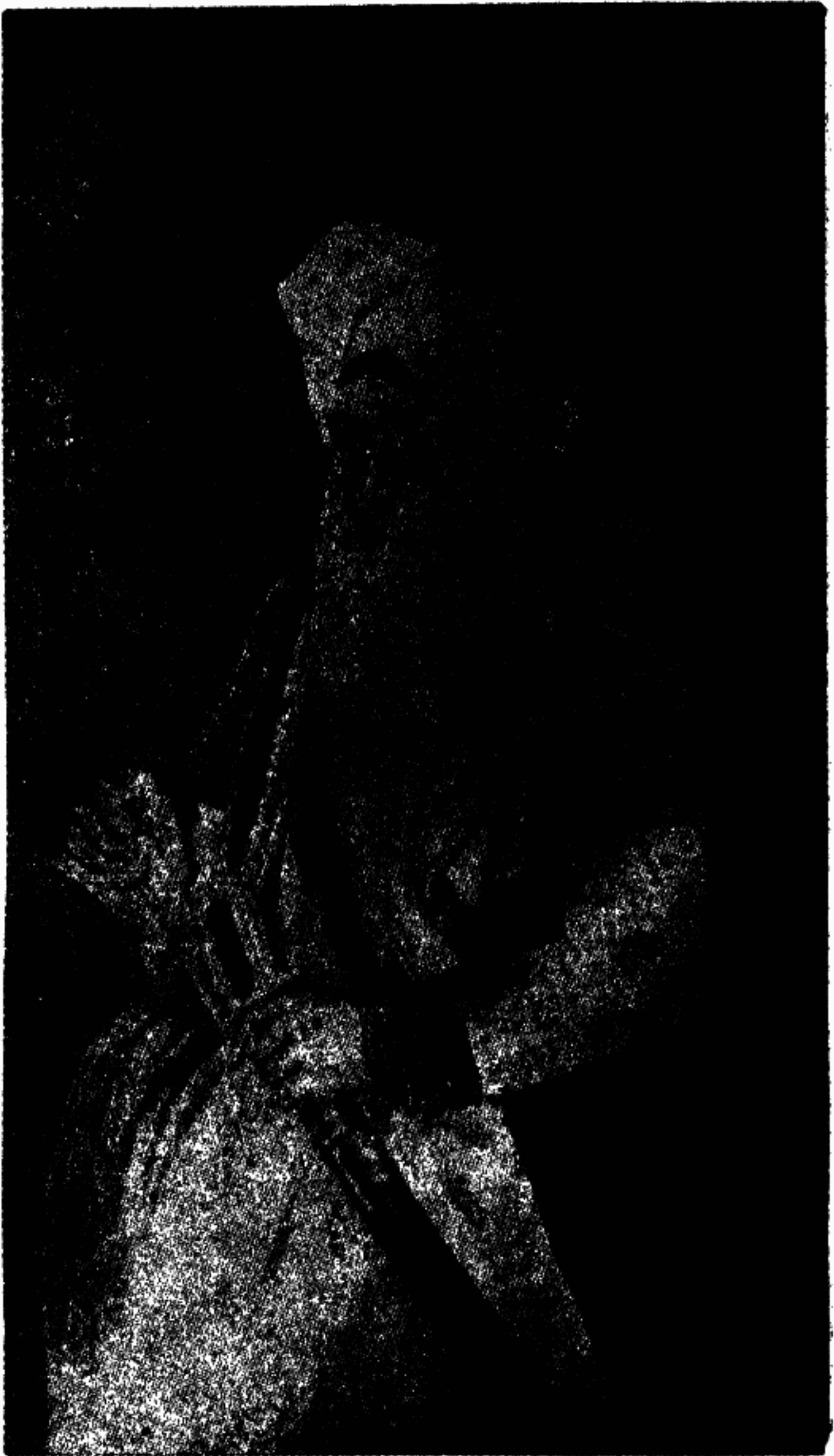
1. It is situated 18 kos to the west of Attock.

See Ganesh Dass : *Fateh Nama Guru Khalsa Ji ka*, pp. 190-192.

It is also said that the Maharaja invoked Guru Gobind Singh for help and, according to Ganesh Dass, the Guru then personally appeared and with his arrows inflicted a crushing defeat on the Afghans.







due to the personal presence of the Maharaja. By his words of encouragement, he revived the drooping spirits of his soldiers who, after the death of Akali Phula Singh, had been greatly demoralized.

Peshawar was next disturbed in 1827 by one Sayid Ahmad Bareilly', who claimed himself to be a Caliph. He aroused the tribesmen to unite and recover their regions from the Sikh rule and within a short time the Afghans from Pakhli, Swat, Buner and Tirah flocked round his standard. They drove out the Sikh forces and challenged Ranjit Singh's supremacy in those regions. The Maharaja sent Hari Singh Nalwa to restore order in the North-West Frontier. That renowned Sikh general defeated Sayid Ahmad and his men at the battle of Saidu. But that defeat did not crush the rising power of Sayid Ahmad. His men continued giving trouble and after some time were able to occupy Peshawar. They even killed Yar Mohammad Khan, the functionary of the Lahore Government in Peshawar. Ranjit Singh then sent another expedition under Prince Sher Singh and Ventura. Peshawar was reconquered and given to Sultan Mohammad, the brother of Yar Mohammad.

In 1833-34, the Afghan ruler of Kabul and Shah Shuja, an ex-ruler of Kabul, were involved in a civil war. Ranjit Singh took advantage of it. He sent his general Hari Singh Nalwa to annex Peshawar. Its Muslim Governor, Sultan Mohammad, was expelled and Peshawar was annexed to the Sikh dominions. For the first time, Hari Singh Nalwa, a non-Muslim Governor, was appointed to rule over the turbulent Afghans.

In 1835, Dost Mohammad, the Afghan ruler, decided to re-establish his supremacy over Peshawar. Like his brother Mohammad Azim, he also gave the struggle a religious colour. He called upon the Mohemmadan tribes of the region, namely Khataks, Mohmmands, Yusafzais, to join him in the holy war (*jehad*) against the Sikhs. It is said that he collected as many as 40,000 Afghans and set out to recover Peshawar. Ranjit Singh, however, had not yet made any preparations when the news of Dost

1. Sayid Ahmad's original name was Mir Ahmad and he belonged to Bareilly.

Mohammad's designs reached him. He, therefore, wanted to gain time. Accordingly, he sent Faqir Aziz-ud-din and Harlan Farangi to open negotiations with Dost Mohammad and, thus, delay his advance. Dost Mohammad fell into Ranjit Singh's trap and thus, wasted time. Meanwhile, Ranjit Singh was able to mobilize all his military resources and marched to meet the Afghan forces. For some days, Ranjit Singh's forces lay opposite to Dost Mohammad's forces, but the latter could not muster up courage to take action. At last, without giving a battle, the Afghan ruler retreated. That was a great bloodless victory for Ranjit Singh and it dealt a serious blow to the reputation and prestige of Dost Mohammad.

In 1837, Dost Mohammad tried to retrieve his prestige and sent a large force under his son Akbar to recover Peshawar. The Sikh forces led by Hari Singh Nalwa advanced to meet the enemy. A hard-contested battle was fought at Jamrud. Hari Singh Nalwa, 'the greatest Khalsa General' was killed, but the Afghans failed to dislodge the Sikhs from Jamrud, and after some time retired.

Thus, from 1811 to 1834, Ranjit Singh extended his kingdom in the north-west right up to the natural boundaries of the Panjab.

He also made vain attempts to extend his dominions to the south of the Indus and to the south of the Satluj. The British forestalled him in those regions. The Lahore Chief, therefore, was in a great dilemma whether he should fight the British or accept the limits to his kingdom. Ranjit Singh calculated calmly and found that, both in extent of territory and resources, he was no match for the British. Consequently, he decided not to extend his conquests beyond the Satluj in the east and beyond Panjnad in the direction of Sindh.

Ranjit Singh's kingdom, at the height of its power, comprised an area of 1,40,000 square miles. In the north, it extended on the one side to Ladakh and Iskardu and, on the other, to the Sulaiman Hills. In the south-east it extended up to the River Satluj and in the south-west up to Shikarpur, but excluding that city. One of the most cherished aspirations of the Maharaja during the later days of his life was Shikarpur; but, as was the case with his south-east boundary, a greater power than his own (the British) had set limits to his ambitions in the south-west.



**Books For Further Study**

1. Ganesh Das : *Fateh Nama Guru Khalsaji Ka*
2. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
3. Kanhya Lal : *Tarikh-i-Punjab*
4. Sohan Lal Suri : *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*
5. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*
6. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*
7. Steinbach : *The Punjab*
8. Cunningham : *History of the Sikhs*
9. Payne : *A Short History of the Sikhs*

## CHAPTER XXI

### ANGLO-SIKH RELATIONS UNDER RANJIT SINGH

#### I

#### EARLY RELATIONS

1800-1806

Ranjit Singh first came into contact with the British as early as 1800. It was then rumoured that Shah Zaman was planning an invasion of India. Accordingly, the British sent  
**First Contact:** Munshi Yusuf Ali Khan with gifts to be presented  
**1800. Yusuf Ali's** to the Maharaja. The Munshi was asked to  
**Mission** request Ranjit Singh not to join Shah Zaman in case he invaded India. But soon the alarm of the Afghan invasion disappeared before the arrival of the Munshi at Lahore. All the same, he presented the gifts of the Governor-General to the Maharaja before leaving Lahore. This first British contact with the Maharaja has generally remained unnoticed by the historians, as it was a simple and unimportant affair.

It was in 1805 that the Maharaja came into much closer contact with the British. Jaswant Rao Holkar, the Maratha Chief, and Amir Khan, the Pindari leader, after suffering  
**Holkar came to** defeats at the hands of the British, came to the  
**Amritsar and** Punjab<sup>1</sup> to seek the help of Ranjit Singh. At that  
**sought Ranjit** time, however, Ranjit Singh had gone away to  
**Singh's Help** conquer Multan and Jhang. But when Ranjit Singh came to know of the arrival of the Maratha leader, he hastened back to Amritsar and called a meeting of the Sarbat Khalsa to decide what policy he should follow towards the Holkar. His friends, particularly Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Bhag Singh of Jind, advised him not to incur British hostility by rendering help to the Maratha Chief. Ranjit Singh, therefore, told the Holkar that it would not be possible for him to join him in his wars against the British. Thus frustrated, the Holkar thought it wise to come to terms with Lord Lake, the British General, who was

1. First they halted at Patiala and tried to enlist the support of its ruler, but failed. See Cunningham : *History of the Sikhs*, p. 128 : Kanahya Lal says that Holkar came with an army of 40,000 soldiers.

pursuing him. Lake on account of the change of the Governor-General at Calcutta, offered very moderate terms and, consequently, on 24th December, 1805, a treaty was signed between the British and Holkar. According to the treaty, Holkar was restored most of his possessions and was allowed to return quietly to central India.

Those events were followed by a formal treaty—"treaty of friendship and unity" which General Lake concluded with Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh on January 1, 1806. By the terms of the treaty, Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh agreed:

**Treaty of Friendship between the Sikhs and Lord Lake : January 1806**

(1) To force Holkar and his army to leave Amritsar immediately and see that he went at least thirty miles away from Amritsar ;

(2) to give no trouble to the Maratha and the Pindari forces during their retreat.

On the other hand, the Governor-General promised that so long as Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh remained friendly with the British, they would never "form any plans for the seizure or sequestration of their possessions or property." That treaty excluded Holkar from the Punjab and practically secured Ranjit Singh from English interference in his plans of conquests to the north of the Satluj.

The Maharaja has often been criticized for having shown timidity in not concluding an alliance with Holkar against the British. This, however, is not a fair criticism. If Ranjit Singh had undertaken to help Holkar at that time, he would have ended his career before it had begun. Moreover, Ranjit Singh did not want that his infant State should become a battle-ground between the two major powers of India—the English and the Marathas. Besides, Ranjit Singh's discerning eye clearly saw that Holkar's alliance would not prove useful to him, as his power had already been broken by the British. He, therefore, thought that to help Holkar<sup>1</sup> was to undertake a huge liability which might lead to his own ruin. With such wise considerations, Ranjit Singh refused Holkar's offer of alliance.

**Criticism of the Treaty**

1. It is said that Ranjit Singh had formed a poor estimate of Holkar and considered him a *pukka haramzada*, i.e. a confirmed bastard.

## II

### Events Leading to the Metcalfe Mission and the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809

The treaty of 1806 left Ranjit Singh free to carry on his plans for the subjugation of the Punjab, as nothing had been stipulated in the treaty regarding the eastern limits of his dominions. In July 1806, a dispute arose over Doladhi between Sahib Singh, the Raja of Patiala, and Jaswant Singh of Nabha. Jaswant Singh and his ally Bhag Singh of Jind invited Ranjit Singh to intervene and settle their dispute. The invitation exactly suited the Maharaja's plans and was accepted with alacrity. He crossed the Satluj, taking with him an army considerably larger than what was warranted by the peaceful nature of his mission. The Raja of Patiala, after a brief resistance, submitted to the arbitration of Ranjit Singh and even paid a huge *nazrana* to him. Thereafter, Ranjit Singh conquered Ludhiana and Ghungrana which he divided among his friends who were, however, required to pay a regular tribute to him. Thus, this first 'cis-Satluj' expedition of Ranjit Singh established his foothold over a small fringe of the territory south of the Satluj.

First 'Cis-Satluj' or 'Malwa' Expedition (1806) and Conquests of Ludhiana and Ghungrana

In the next year, Ranjit Singh was again called upon to intervene in the cis-Satluj affairs. Rani Aus Kaur of Patiala fell out with her husband, Raja Sahib Singh, and, consequently, invited Ranjit Singh to espouse her cause against the Raja. She promised to give him a brass cannon and a costly necklace in return for his aid.<sup>1</sup> The Maharaja marched to Patiala; but before he reached there the Raja and the Rani had been reconciled. He, however, got the promised brass gun and the necklace from the Rani and also exacted *nazrana* from the Raja. From Patiala, Ranjit Singh proceeded to Naraingarh which he conquered. He also conquered Zira, Wadni and Ferozepore on his way back.

Second 'Cis-Satluj' or 'Malwa' Expedition: 1807. Conquest of Naraingarh, Zira and Wadni

1. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*, page 22. There are several versions why Ranjit Singh was called to interfere in cis-Satluj affairs. According to one, it was not the Rani but Raja Sahib Singh who had invited Ranjit Singh. According to another, Raja Bhag Singh of Jind called Ranjit Singh, as Rani Aus Kaur, in alliance with the chiefs of Kaithal and Thanesar, had threatened him.



Those two expeditions produced consternation in the minds of the cis-Satluj Sikh Chiefs. They, therefore, decided to seek the

**The 'Cis-Satluj' Chiefs Wait on Mr Seton and the Latter's Evasive Reply**

protection of the British. Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal and the agents of the Patiala and Nabha Rajas went to Delhi and saw Mr Seton, the British Resident at Delhi. That meeting took place in March 1808. The Sikh Chiefs wanted Mr Seton to give them a solemn assurance of protection against aggression by Ranjit Singh. Mr Seton was sympathetic to their cause but the policy of his government was then opposed to any definite commitment on that matter. So he gave an evasive reply. Thereupon, the Sikh Chiefs returned disappointed and decided to wait upon Ranjit Singh in order to negotiate direct treaties with him to maintain the integrity of their dominions.

But the decisive factor in Ranjit Singh's relations with the British was the Treaty of Tilsit which was concluded between

**Treaty of Tilsit and Decision of Minto to send Metcalfe to Ranjit Singh**

Napoleon and Tsar Alexander in July 1807. This treaty made the British in India feel that those two powers might jointly invade India via Afghanistan and the Punjab. In order to meet that danger, Lord Minto sent C.T. Metcalfe to Lahore to negotiate and sign a treaty of friendship with Ranjit Singh.

Metcalfe met Maharaja Ranjit Singh on 11th September 1808 at Khem Karan near Kasur. He placed before him the proposal of

**Metcalfe's First Meeting with Ranjit Singh at Khem Karan: September 1808**

an offensive and a defensive alliance against France in the event of an invasion, which both the British and the Maharaja were equally interested in repelling. Ranjit Singh said that he was willing to accept the British proposals on two conditions. First, that the British would not interfere in case he was involved in a war against the Amir of Kabul; and secondly, to acknowledge him as the sovereign of the entire Sikh Nation, including the 'Malwa' (cis-Satluj) Sikhs. Metcalfe could not make any promise to accept those conditions, as he was not authorized by the Governor-General to recognize Ranjit Singh's sovereignty to the east of the River Satluj. Consequently, Ranjit Singh put off the negotiations and made his third inroad into the south of the Satluj.

During this third cis-Satluj expedition, he conquered Faridkot and Malerkotla. He advanced further and seized Ambala and

**Third Cis-Satluj Expedition of Ranjit Singh: September 1808 to December 1808**

Shahabad. He also exacted tribute from the Chief of Thanesar. Cunningham says that he even 'entered into a symbolical brotherhood of alliance with the Raja of Patiala. 'Metcalf remonstrated against this aggressive policy of Ranjit Singh, but the Maharaja did not take any notice of it. In December 1808, Ranjit Singh returned to Lahore.

In the meantime, the British came to know that the Franco-Russian danger was well past. With that change in the political situation, they grew firm. They sent a force under Ochterlony to

**British Grew Firm**

the Punjab to back the British demands. Metcalfe again approached the Maharaja to sign a treaty by which he should relinquish all his claims over

the territory lying to the south of the Satluj. But the Maharaja could not accept the proposal which thwarted his most cherished object of bringing all the Sikh *Misls* under a unified control. Sir L. Griffin says that "his disgust was such that he prepared for war. Troops and ammunition were collected from all quarters. The new fort of Gobindgarh at Amritsar was armed and provisioned for a siege and General Mohkam Chand, the best of the Sikh Generals and a bitter enemy of the English, was recalled from Kangra and marched to Phillaur on the Satluj."<sup>1</sup>

The British retaliated. They asked Sir David Ochterloney to make a demonstration of force. Ochterloney, thereupon, marched to Ludhiana and in February 1809 even issued an "Itlahanama"

**Ranjit, at last Forced to Sign the Treaty of Amritsar : 1809**

or Proclamation by which he asked Ranjit Singh to withdraw his troops from the cis-Satluj territory. In case of non-compliance, the British General stated that it should be plain that the Maharaja

has no regard for the friendship of the British but, on the contrary, resolves on enmity."<sup>2</sup> These threats gave the Maharaja some anxious moments. But the moderating influence of Faqir Aziz-ud-din, however, eventually prevailed and Ranjit Singh accepted the British proposals. He, therefore, withdrew his forces from Faridkot on 2nd April, 1809. Later on, he also recalled his troops

1. Sir L. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 179

2. A. C. Banerjee : *Anglo Sikh Relations*, p. 151

from Ambala and on April 25, he signed the famous Treaty of Amritsar.<sup>1</sup>

### III

#### The Treaty of Amritsar (1809) and Its Significance

The Treaty of Amritsar was concluded by Ranjit Singh in person and by C.T. Metcalfe on behalf of the British Government on April 25, 1809. The treaty consisted of four Articles. In the

**Treaty of Amritsar (First Article)**

first Article, both the British and the Maharaja agreed to maintain friendly relations with each other and the Lahore State was to be treated as "one of the most favoured power" by the British.

By that Article, the British also made it clear that they would have no concern with the territories and subjects of the Raja to the north of the River Satluj.

**Second Article** According to the Second Article, Ranjit Singh agreed not to keep on the left bank of the Satluj more troops than were necessary for the maintenance of law and order in that territory.

**Third Article** The Third Article stated that in the event of a violation of any of the above Articles, that treaty would be considered null and void.

**Fourth Article** The Fourth Article is unimportant. It simply stated that the Treaty was signed at Amritsar and it also contained the names of the signatories.

**Significance of Treaty (i) Placed a Check on Ranjit Singh's Cherished Ideal** The Treaty of Amritsar is a landmark in the history of Ranjit Singh. In the first instance, it placed a definite check on his ambition. It deprived him of one of the most cherished objects of his life, i.e. the ideal of being the sole ruler of all the Sikhs in the west and east of the Satluj. It was humiliating for the Maharaja and, henceforth, he was forced to be the ruler of only a portion of the Sikhs and not of all the Sikhs. It was a bitter pill that Ranjit had to swallow. It was, in fact, an open defeat of Ranjit Singh in the game of diplomacy.

1. Sinha in his '*Ranjit Singh*', page 31, says that the factor which made Ranjit Singh sign the treaty was the defeat of Akalis by a small band of the Company's Sepoys.

Secondly, it brought the British too near the State of Lahore to remain indifferent. That treaty, in fact, brought the British into the heart of the Punjab. Thereafter, their designs on the Lahore Kingdom became more definite and when Ranjit Singh died, the British had fully acquainted themselves with the real geography and politics of the Sikh State of Lahore.

(ii) Brought the British Nearer to the Lahore Kingdom

Thirdly, the Treaty of Amritsar greatly increased the prestige of the British. Though Ranjit remained independent, there existed thereafter no equality between the British and the Maharaja. The very fact that Ranjit Singh agreed to maintain a limited force on the southern side of the Satluj and desired to be treated as one of 'the most favoured powers' by the British shows the weakness of the Sikh Ruler vis-a-vis the British power in India.

(iii) Lowered the Prestige of Ranjit Singh

But in a way, the treaty of Amritsar proved very useful to Ranjit Singh. It gave Ranjit Singh a *carte blanche* so far as the region to the west of the Satluj was concerned. After that treaty of friendship, Ranjit Singh did not consider it necessary to keep a large portion of his army on the Satluj frontier and, consequently, it became easy for him to conquer Multan, Kashmir, Derajat and Peshawar. Cunningham, therefore, says that one of the indirect results of the Treaty of Amritsar was that Ranjit Singh became "master of the Punjab almost *unheeded* by the British.<sup>1</sup>

(iv) Cunningham's View—It Enabled Ranjit Singh to Conquer Peshawar and Multan, etc.

Finally, by giving protection to Patiala, Nabha and Jind, the British saved them from subjugation by Ranjit Singh. When Ranjit Singh's empire was dissolved after the Anglo-Sikh wars, those states retained their separate entities. Syed Abdul Qadar rightly puts this thing when he says : "If the Government of Lord Minto had not intervened, Ranjit would have taken under his control the cis-Satluj territory as he did the rest of the Punjab and in 1849 from the Jamna to the Khyber, not even one yellow spot (State) would have

(v) A. Qadar's View

1. Cunningham : *History of Sikhs*, p. 141



been left." Thus, it may be said that the States of Patiala, Nabha and Jind retained their separate existence for more than a century after the annexation of the Punjab due to the fortunate intervention of the British in 1809, *i.e.* due to the Treaty of Amritsar.

#### IV

#### Relations of Ranjit Singh with the British From 1809—1839

The Treaty of Amritsar did not and could not establish real friendly relations between the two powers, the Sikhs and the British. Doubt, distrust and suspicion lingered on for some time. Ranjit Singh even raised a small fort at Phillaur on his side of the Satluj to serve as a watch-tower. The deserters from the British army were also given protection. It is said that Ranjit Singh, at one stage, even entered into secret negotiations against the British with Amir Khan, Begum Sammrū and Holkar.

Doubt and Suspicion Lingered up to 1812

But after 1812, the relations began to improve. David Ochterloney was invited from Ludhiana to attend the marriage of Prince Kharak Singh and on that occasion both sides professed sincerity and friendship. In 1815, Ranjit Singh went so far as to offer help to the British against Nepal; and in 1821, when Appa Sahib of Nagpur sought the assistance of the Maharaja at Amritsar against the British, he declined.

Relations Improve after 1812

In 1822, relations were again ruffled for some time over the question of Wadni.<sup>1</sup> But soon cordiality was restored and in 1826 when Ranjit Singh fell ill, Dr. Murray was sent by the British to attend him. In 1827, the claims of Ranjit Singh over Wadni, Anandpur, Makhawal and Chamkaur were admitted. Thus, from 1812 to 1828 the relations were, on the whole, quite friendly or cordial.

But from 1828 onwards, an estrangement began between

1. Wadni, a small town, south of the Satluj was captured by Ranjit Singh in 1808. It was then handed over by the Maharaja to his mother-in-law, Rani Sada Kaur. In 1822, Ranjit quarrelled with his mother-in-law, and imprisoned her and, consequently, sent a force to occupy Wadni, but the British regarded Wadni within their sphere of influence, as it lay on the south of the Satluj, and so did not let Ranjit Singh occupy it.

**Ranjit Singh and the British.** Ranjit Singh put in a claim for Ferozepur. But the British refused that claim. The Maharaja felt bitter, but helpless as he was, he kept quiet. It was, however, the questions of Sind and Shikarpur that further widened the gulf between the two powers. Ranjit Singh, after his conquest of north-west Punjab, wanted outlets to expand. He could not expand towards the east because of the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809. Therefore the natural field of expansion for Ranjit Singh was towards the west i.e. Sind. Besides, Sind was weak and that factor inspired confidence in him that it would be easy for him to annex it. But the British would not allow him even to expand towards Sind. The British had realized its commercial importance and wanted to bring it under their control. Consequently in 1831, Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General, sent Alexander Burnes, the Political Agent of Lahore, to present to the Maharaja one coach and five horses sent by the King of England. He was given instructions to travel via Sind and thus explore the commercial value of Sind. Burns studied the value of Sind very thoroughly and submitted a full report to the Governor-General.

Thereupon, Bentinck decided to establish his control over Sind, but in order to allay the fears of Ranjit Singh, he arranged through captain Wade a meeting at Ropar with the Maharaja. On the bank of the Satluj, the Maharaja met the Governor-General. Great decorations were made in honour of the Governor-General and Ropar, thus, became a "veritable cloth of gold". That meeting took place in October 1831. Ostensibly, the Governor-General

met the Maharaja to show to the world that he and the Maharaja were friendly. Ranjit Singh's purpose of meeting the Governor-General was that he wanted to show to his Sikh Chiefs that he was the acknowledged head of the Khalsa. But the real motives of both the Governor-General and Ranjit Singh were much deeper. Both wanted to steal a march upon Sind, of course, in their own ways. When the Ropar meeting was going on, Col. Pottinger, a British Agent, was on his way to Sind to negotiate a commercial treaty with then Amirs of Sind, or as Abdul Qadar says, "William Bentinck was then lulling Ranjit Singh to sleep at Ropar, so that he may steal a march upon Sind and bring it under the British sphere of influence. Ranjit Singh had come to Ropar to know the mind of the Gover-

**Estrangement Begins**

**The Ropar Meeting : Oct. 1831**

**Ranjit Singh Forestalled in Sind**

nor-General about the Sind question. The result of that meeting, however, was that Bentinck, eventually, succeeded in his real motive and forestalled Ranjit Singh by establishing British supremacy in Sind. It was another bitter pill for Ranjit Singh to swallow; but weak as he was, he swallowed it, as he had already swallowed the first bitter pill in 1809. The British treaty with Sind is said to have given a few sleepless nights to the Maharaja. The British, however, tried to allay his fears by assuring him that the treaty was of a purely commercial nature.

Another case which caused further estrangement between the British and the Maharaja was Shikarpur. The Maharaja had a peculiar fascination for Shikarpur, because that city was a centre of trade, and, besides, it had a great strategic position as it commanded the Bolap Pass. But the English would not let him have a free hand even in the acquisition of that strategic city. They, in fact, stood in the way of Ranjit Singh's securing Shikarpur. In 1836, The Maharaja got an opportunity to invade Sind because one of the Sind tribes, Muzaris, had invaded a Sikh out-post. The Maharaja after defeating the rebels, advanced to capture Shikarpur. But the British sent a small detachment and threatened the Maharaja to withdraw from Shikarpur. Captain Wade personally visited Lahore to exert pressure on Ranjit Singh. In the end, the Maharaja yielded and withdrew his forces. It is said that at that time, several Sikh *Sardars*, including Raja Dhian Singh, grew angry with the Maharaja. Some of them even waved their swords and wished the Maharaja to fight. But he silenced them by reminding them of how two lakhs of Maratha forces had been defeated by the British force. The Maharaja, however, soon forgot the insult and invited the British Governor-General next year to attend the marriage of his grandson.

The gulf between Ranjit Singh and the British was further widened on the question of Ferozepur. The British had already realized that, sooner or later, they would have to come into conflict with the Maharaja and had noticed the strategic importance of Ferozepur which was only 40 miles from Lahore. Consequently, they occupied it in 1835 and three years later converted it into a military cantonment. Ranjit Singh again fretted and fumed, but the British did not withdraw from their stand.

Shikarpur further Deepened the Gulf between Ranjit Singh and the British

Question of Ferozepur

In 1836, circumstances in Europe and Asia reacted on the Anglo-Sikh relationship in India. The Russians were expanding towards Asia. The British in order to check Russian designs wanted to have friendly relations with the Afghans. They, therefore, sent Captain Burnes to Kabul to make an alliance with the Afghan Amir, Dost Muhammad. The Kabul Ruler asked the British that he would help them provided they would get him Peshawar from Ranjit Singh. The British could not afford to alienate the Lahore Ruler because his friendship was as valuable as that of the Afghans to fight the Russian menace. Thus, when the alliance with Dost Mohammad could not be concluded, the British contracted one with Ranjit Singh. In 1839, a Tripartite Treaty was proposed by the British to Ranjit Singh, whereby the British, Shah Shuja (the ex-ruler of Afghanistan) and Ranjit Singh were to wage a war against the common enemy—Dost Mohmamad. Ranjit Singh did not want to sign the treaty and it is said that at one stage he even declined to be a party to the tripartite plan of agreement, but once again he yielded to the threats of Macnaghton, the British Agent, who had come to Lahore to get the treaty signed. Still Ranjit Singh's distrust and suspicion were so strong that he did not agree to one important proposal of the British, that is, to give passage to the British soldiers through his territories in the event of an attack on Kabul. This distrust and suspicion increased so much towards the close of his reign that we find him taking even active measures against the British. In 1837, he welcomed the Nepali Mission which implied that the Maharaja and Nepal might jointly take a spirited action against the British. "This cordial relation with Nepal", says Sinha "is as yet the only thing on which we are to stand if we conclude that if Ranjit had been at the helm of affairs in the Punjab at the time of the Afghan disaster, he would have taken advantage of the British difficulty, the discontent of the Gwalior army and the hostile attitude of Nepal".<sup>1</sup> Thus, we can venture to say that the Shikarpur affair and Ferozepur and Sind questions had created such a wide gulf between the Maharaja and the British that it was quite possible that the former, if alive, might have measured his strength with the latter at the time of the great British disaster of the first Afghan war.

1. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*



### **Criticism of Ranjit Singh's Relations with the British**

Throughout the Anglo-Sikh relations we find the British having the upper hand. After the Treaty of Amritsar, the British became more and more aggressive. They were not acting according to the terms of the Treaty. The way they forestalled Ranjit Singh in Ferozepur, Shikarpur and Sind bear testimony to the aggressive designs of the British on the Punjab. Thus, the underlying motive of the British relations with Ranjit Singh was that after consolidating their position in the rest of India, they should destroy the Sikh power by encircling it. Throughout, they considered themselves superior and they never had a doubt that they would not establish their paramountcy over the Punjab. They were simply gaining time. On the other hand, Ranjit Singh's position, vis-a-vis the British, was that he was also not friendly with them. He was conscious of his weakness. He felt a bitter humiliation whenever the British would not let him have his own way ; but he did not muster up courage to resort to arms against the British whom he considered a very great power. Thus, as Sinha says, "In the last decade of his life, Ranjit is a 'pathetic figure, helpless and inert.'" He avoided clash in spite of British provocation. He would even silence his *Sardars* if they suggested war against the British. He would often say "Sab Lal ho jaiga" (i.e. every part of the Punjab would come under the British domination) and quoted the example of the Maratha power which had been defeated by the British.

The policy of the Maharaja towards the British is commendable only in one respect which is that so long as he lived, he maintained his independence and, realizing his limitations, he preserved the Sikh State as far as he could.

But no one can acquit Ranjit Singh of his responsibility for the decline of the Sikh State. He should have realized that war with the British was to come sooner or later. Instead of postponing the evil day, he should have himself fought the war. It is in no way creditable to go on compromising every time with the aggressor. Perhaps, he feared to expose the kingdom he had created to the risk of war and annihilation and, therefore, avoided a war policy and instead 'chose the policy of yielding, yielding, yielding and yielding'.

**Books For Further Study**

1. **Cunningham : *History of Sikhs***
2. **A. C. Banerjee : *Anglo-Sikh Relations***
3. **Sinha : *Ranjit Singh***
4. **Griffin : *Ranjit Singh***
5. **Steinbach : *The Punjab***
6. **Latif : *History of the Punjab***
7. **Payne : *A Short History of Sikhs***
8. **Sarkar and Dutta : *A Text-book of Modern Indian History***

## CHAPTER XXII

### COURT OF RANJIT SINGH

#### I

#### Some Features of Ranjit Singh's Court

Like all great oriental rulers, Maharaja Ranjit Singh maintained a splendid Court in which most of the day-to-day business of the State was carried on. Foreign missions were received in the Durbar where presents were received from them and, in return, gifts were bestowed upon them. A number of ceremonials were observed to maintain the dignity of the Court.

**Ranjit Singh's Court**

One of the most remarkable features of Ranjit Singh's Court was its magnificence. The Maharaja occupied a prominent position ; but he did not wear a rich dress, whereas his courtiers did. Sometimes, however, he would wear the Koh-i-Noor diamond on one of his arms. He used to sit on a chair with silver arms and legs<sup>1</sup>, which served the purpose of a throne. All the courtiers were "generally clothed in every diversity of colour and every imaginable variety of picturesque costume". The magnificence of Ranjit Singh's Court reminded the foreign visitors of the glory and splendour of Shah Jahan's Court. Steinbach says, "All that the imagination can conceive of human grandeur, all that the most exuberant fancy can devise in its endeavour to portray the acme of royal splendour<sup>2</sup> was embodied in the Darbar of Ranjit Singh."

**Its Splendour**

Regarding the arrangement of the Court, the Maharaja used to sit in the centre. He generally sat cross-legged. All the courtiers, except the princes or a few ministers, were required to stand by his side. Only three persons were allowed to sit on the chairs. They were Prince Kharak Singh, the heir-apparent, Prince Sher Singh, and the boy Hira Singh, son of the Prime Minister, Raja Dhian Singh—for whom Ranjit Singh had special fondness. Behind

**Order of Precedence at the Court**

1. Steinbach : *Punjab*, p. 94

2. *Ibid.* page 112

Ranjit Singh's chair stood Raja Dhian Singh and on the sides on the ground sat Fakir Aziz-ud-din, the foreign minister, and other ministers. All others had to keep standing.

Most of the conversation in the Court, according to McGregor, was done in Punjabi. The Court proceedings and all other official drafts, however, were recorded in Persian. The Court Etiquette Maharaja was very particular about the Court etiquette. Any deviation from rules was seriously punished. It was also a part of the etiquette not to initiate any talk in the Court, unless the Maharaja specifically addressed anyone to speak on a certain topic. Only the boy Hira Singh had the privilege of initiating any talk, or even interrupting the Maharaja in the middle of the conversation.

The chief feature of Ranjit Singh's Court was that it was cosmopolitan in character. Though himself a Jat Sikh, he did not favour his own kinsmen<sup>1</sup>. Rather, 'in the Council he gave his confidence to Brahmans, Rajputs, Mohammedans or even to Khattris'. He also employed European officers to train his army and consequently, gave them dignified positions in the Court. But he imposed certain restrictions even on them. They were required not to take beef, and not to smoke. Moreover, they were required to live with their wives, and also to grow beards so long as they were in the service of the Maharaja.

## II

### The Personalities of the Court

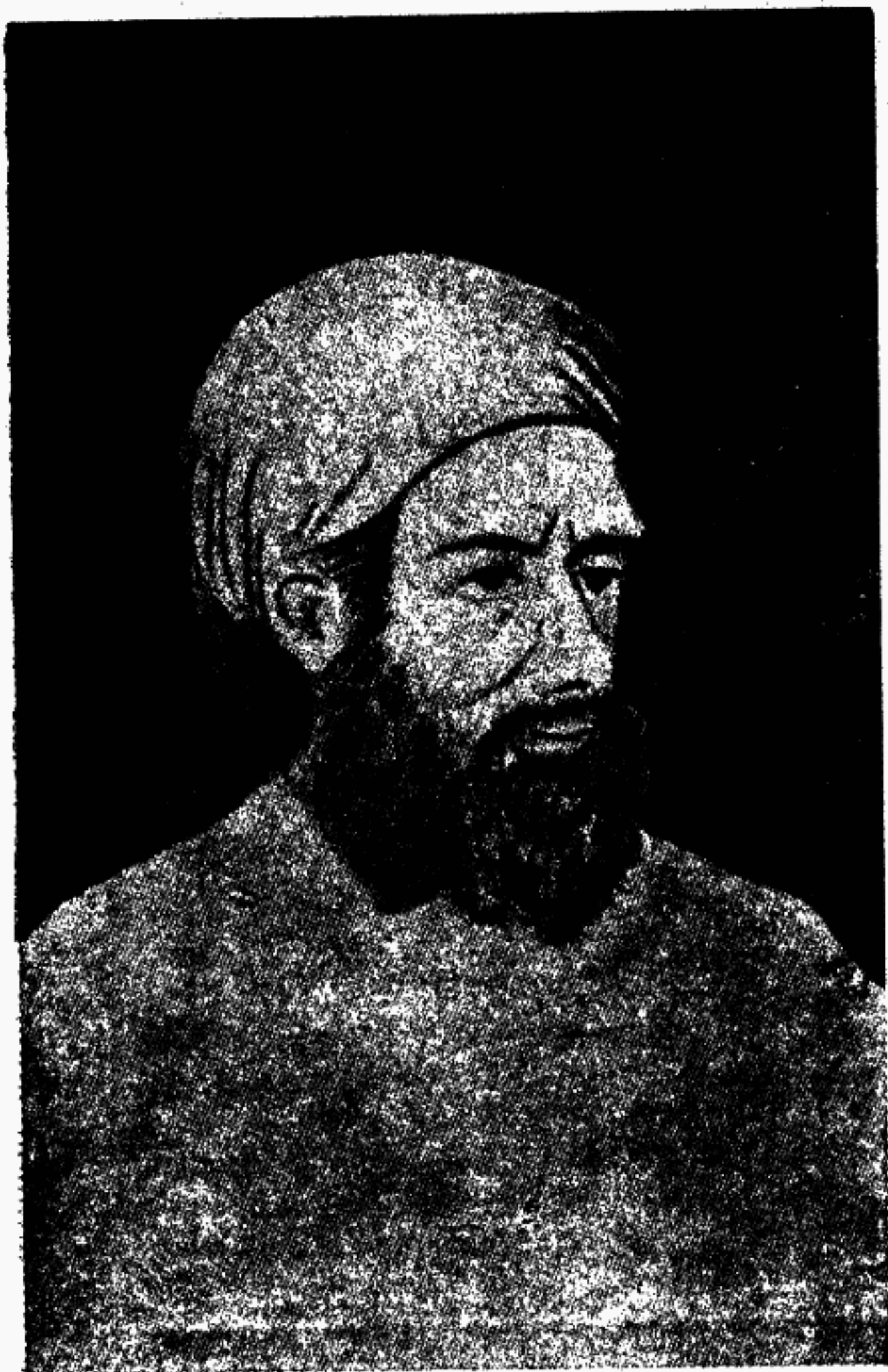
#### (a) The Princes

Next to the Maharaja in rank and dignity were the princes. He had seven sons, namely Kharak Singh, Sher Singh, Dalip Singh, Kashmira Singh, Multana Singh, Pashaura Singh and Tara Singh. Kharak Singh was the eldest. He was born in 1802 of Mai Nakkain. In the Court, he was given a chair. Ranjit Singh gave him the nominal command of the perilous expeditions of Multan and Kashmir. In 1839, after the death of Ranjit Singh, Kharak Singh ascended the throne, but failed to curb the power of his rivals—the

Kharak Singh  
and Sher Singh

1. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 117





**Dogra Rajas—and, consequently, was thrown into prison by Dhian Singh.**

Another prince who was given the privilege of sitting on a chair in the Court was Sher Singh. He was the son of the Maharaja by the Kanheyia Princess, Mehtab Kaur. Though, in the beginning, the Maharaja did not have good relations with his son, yet towards the close of his reign, the latter, by his ability and devotion, succeeded in winning the royal favour. He took a prominent part in the frontier wars and it was he who killed Khalifa Sayid Ahmad. In the confusion that followed the death of Kharak Singh, Sher Singh also fished in the troubled waters and was able to establish his rule for a short time.

### **(b) The Fakir Brothers**

Next to the princes, the most conspicuous figure in Ranjit Singh's Court was Fakir Aziz-ud-din, his foreign minister. He belonged to the famous Ansari family of Bokhara. His father's name was Ghulam Mohy-ud-din, a medical practitioner or a barber surgeon. Steinbach tells us that his ancestors first lived in the Patiala State, but, in the time of Ranjit Singh, they had shifted to Lahore.

Aziz-ud-din began his career as the personal physician of Ranjit Singh. The skill and attention of the young physician won the Maharaja's regard and, consequently, the latter raised him to what was practically the rank of a minister of foreign affairs. It is said that the following duties were assigned to him.

- (1) He was to attend on the Maharaja and his relatives in case of their illness.
- (2) He was to give counsel to the Maharaja in all matters regarding diplomacy, war and peace.
- (3) He was to receive and welcome the Europeans in the Court.
- (4) It was through him that negotiations with foreign powers, such as the Europeans and the Afghans, were carried out.
- (5) The privilege of interpreting and explaining Ranjit Singh's words was enjoyed by him.

Fakir Aziz-ud-din exercised a profound influence on the foreign policy of Ranjit Singh. In 1809, when Metcalfe insisted on Ranjit Singh's signing the treaty of friendship and the  
**Fakir's Influence on the Maharaja's Foreign Policy** latter wavered, it was the influence and counsel of the Fakir Sahib, as Aziz-ud-din was called, which finally made him sign the treaty. Similarly, it was due to Aziz-ud-din that throughout Ranjit Singh's reign, friendship was maintained with the British. This Muslim foreign minister also played a very important role in 1834-35, when Dost Mohammad launched a huge attack to recover his north-west frontier possessions from Ranjit Singh. Fakir Aziz-ud-din was sent to the Afghan Amir to gain time and he successfully achieved his object. He was, thus, a great negotiator and Steinbach gives the following picture of Aziz-ud-din's skill in carrying out negotiations with foreign powers :

"He was a very able negotiator, insidious beyond measure, a complete master of the science of eloquence. He was the mouth-  
**Aziz-ud-din as a Negotiator** piece of the Sikh Sardars and as he almost always formed the head nominally of the missions as they were occasionally sent on, he had their free leave to talk, while they sat by and listened in silence and admiration to the valuable flow of his ceaseless harangues."<sup>1</sup>

As an interpreter, too, Steinbach says that the Fakir had no equal. He writes :—"His other most important duty was interpreting the Maharaja's words. Few, besides the  
**As an Interpreter** Fakir.....could really.....understand him. A few inarticulate growlings of the old lion were quite enough to vivify the Fakir's imagination and so lengthy often was his paraphrase of the Maharaja's verbal text that one became inclined to wonder with Mons. Jourdain 'whether one word in Turkish could mean so much'<sup>2</sup>.

Aziz-ud-din was as able with his pen as with his tongue. He  
**As a Scholar** was a great writer and composed Persian verses of high order. One of his favourite couplets was :

"Council is like the dice, Fate is like the mark upon the board ; it is within your hand, yet for all that is not within your hand."

1. Steinbach : *The Punjab*, p. 99

2. *Ibid.*, page 99

He also founded at his own expense at Lahore a college for the study of Persian and Arabic. He was liberal in his religious beliefs and a 'Sufi' in his outlook. He had 'no love for the barren dogmas of the Koran'. He died in December, 1845, just before the First Sikh War.

Steinbach sums up his estimate of Fakir Aziz-ud-din in the following words : "He is indeed the last of the indigenous diplomatists of Hindustan, of those men whose skill in art has been so much and so long."

Aziz-ud-din's younger brothers also held high positions in Ranjit Singh's Court. Nur-ud-din was the head of 'Gulab Khana' and was commonly called 'Khalifa Sahib'. Imam-ud-din was in charge of Gobindgarh, the most important Sikh stronghold.

Aziz-ud-din's  
Brothers—  
Nur-ud-din and  
Imam-ud-din

### The Dogra Rajas or the Jammu Brothers

The Dogra Rajas, Dhian Singh, Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh, also occupied very high positions in the Lahore Durbar. All of them were handsome and had soldierly bearings. They were also past masters in the art of flattery. They, therefore, enjoyed the trust of the Maharaja who had conferred the title of 'Raja' on each of them.

These Dogra Rajas or the Jammu brothers were the sons of Kishore Singh and grandsons of Zorawar Singh. Raja Dhian Singh, the eldest, was the most potent influence in the Court and Sinha says, "Indeed, Dhian Singh may very well be described as the Prime Minister. He was the channel of petition and representation." He even held a miniature court of his own in his own house. He also enjoyed the title of 'Raja Kalan Bahadur'.

Raja Dhian  
Singh

Dhian Singh was born in 1779 at Ismailpur Deoli, ten miles from Jammu. He joined Ranjit Singh as an ordinary *Ghorchara* in 1817. According to Osborne, he was the model of manly beauty and intelligence. After Jamadar Khushal Singh's term, Ranjit Singh appointed Dhian Singh the head of the 'Deorhi' Department. He was anti-British and Fane says that he was 'cold and repulsive towards Europeans whom he hated and feared'. He did not like Ranjit Singh's policy of yielding to the British at every step and it was he who openly called Ranjit Singh 'a woman' when he yielded in the case of Shikarpur. He was,



however, not sincere to Ranjit Singh and his dynasty, and after the Maharaja's death, he and his brother Raja Gulab Singh, instead of serving the kingdom, became instruments which led to the ruin of the Sikh power in the Punjab.

Raja Gulab Singh was the elder brother of Dhian Singh and was born at the same place, Ismailpur. Unlike Dhian Singh, he did not occupy a prominent position in the Court. He was all the time Managing *jagirs* of the Jammu Rajas. He was a machiavellian and was the most cunning of all the brothers. During Ranjit Singh's period, he was often charged with rebellious attitude, but on account of the intervention of Dhian Singh, his faults were overlooked.

He was, however, a warrior of great repute and Jacquemont describes him as "a soldier of fortune, with elegant manners". During Ranjit Singh's lifetime, he waged wars against the hill chiefs of Ladakh and conquered them. After the Maharaja's death, Gulab Singh did not play an honourable role in Sikh history. Like other Dogra chiefs, he did not remain loyal to the Sikh dynasty. During the First Sikh War, he turned a traitor and after its conclusion, purchased Kashmir from the British. Gulab Singh, thus, became the first ruler of Kashmir under the British.

Raja Suchet Singh was the youngest of the Dogra Rajas and was the most well-dressed man of Ranjit Singh's Court. Like the medieval knights of Europe, he was very particular about his dress and the court etiquette. He was a model of chivalry and always dressed smartly. He was a splendid sportsman. He did not play any important part during the reign of Ranjit Singh.

Raja Hira Singh was the son of Raja Dhian Singh and was a great favourite of Ranjit Singh. He occupied a chair in the Court. He was fond of European dress. After the death of Ranjit Singh, he became the leader of the Jammu party and held the office of the Prime Minister under Maharaja Dalip Singh for about a year and a half.

#### D. The Europeans or "Firinghees"

Nearly forty<sup>1</sup> Europeans were employed by Ranjit Singh. But

1. Gardner says that the number of white officers of Ranjit Singh was 42. Smith says that there were 39 European officers.



the most famous among them were Ventura, Allard and Court. Up to 1822, there were only two white officers in Ranjit Singh's service—James and Gordon. But subsequently, a large number of military officers, who had served under Napoleon, came from Europe and joined Ranjit Singh's service. Those Europeans, however, were strictly instructed neither to take beef nor to smoke, and were required to grow beard and live with their wives.

Ventura is the most well-known European courtier of Ranjit Singh. He was a Jew. His original name was Ribbon Ventura.

Ventura                      He had served as a colonel in Napoleon's army. He came to the Punjab in 1822 and joined Ranjit Singh's service. He remained in his service for about twenty years. He was the Commander-in-Chief of the 'Fauj-i-Khas' or French Legion. It was he who had organized Ranjit's infantry on European lines.

Ventura was the most favourite of the Maharaja among the Europeans. He was not subject to the general restrictions imposed on the Europeans and was allowed to smoke. He was given Anarkali as his residence, the residence which was usually reserved for princes. He was a great general and fought against the Pathans of the N.W. Frontier. He drew a salary of Rs. 2500 per month and, besides, held a big *jagir*. In 1825, he married a European lady at Lahore and Ranjit Singh gave him a rich present. The Sikh Sardars did not relish special favours to Ventura and hated him. In 1844, before the First Sikh War began, he left the Punjab.

Allard was another important European in the Court of Ranjit Singh. He was a French man who had served under Napoleon.

Allard                      After Napoleon's fall, he left France for Central Asia. For some time, he served under the Shah of Persia. In 1822, he joined Ranjit Singh's service. He was the man who organized the cavalry of the Maharaja, i.e. the *Rasala* on European lines. Like Ventura, he was also regarded by all sections of people as an undesirable intruder. He married an Indian wife. He died in 1839 and was buried at Lahore.

Court, like other Europeans, had also served under Napoleon. He joined Ranjit Singh's service in 1827. He was in charge of the



**Court**                      artillery of the Maharaja and he greatly improved it. He was greatly interested in historical research and his researches in antiquities and old coins are wellknown. He was not popular with the Sikhs soldiers and was attacked after Ranjit Singh's death. Consequently, he fled to Europe.

**Avitabile**                Avitabile was another important European of the Lahore Durbar. He was not a great military officer but was a civilian. He held the governorship of Peshawar for some time and is said to have given a good system of administration to that frontier province.

### **E. The Sikh Sardars**

Among the Sikhs, Hari Singh Nalwa, "the Murat of the Sikh Army" and the "Marshall of the Khalsa" occupied the most prominent position in the Court. He was born at Gujranwala, *i.e.* the same place where Ranjit Singh was born.  
**Hari Singh Nalwa**        He was one of the most skilful and brave generals of the Maharaja. He was employed to command a number of important expeditions. He was chiefly instrumental in the capture of Multan in 1818. He earned great fame in the frontier wars and his name became a terror for the Pathans. In 1834, when Ranjit Singh took over the administration of Peshawar from the hands of the Afghan Governors, Hari Singh Nalwa was appointed its first Sikh Governor. Hari Singh succeeded in restoring law and order in that far-flung frontier province. In 1837, he was killed while fighting against the Afghans.

Desa Singh Majithia and his son Lehna Singh were also among the well-known Sikh courtiers of Ranjit Singh. Desa Singh was one of the ablest Sikh Sardars. In 1809  
**Desa Singh Majithia and His Son Lehna Singh**        he was appointed Nazim or Governor of the hill States of Kangra, Mandi, etc. and he held that office till his death. For some years, he held the charge of the Golden Temple, Amritsar. In 1832, Desa Singh died and after his death his son Lehna Singh succeeded to all his father's estate and honours. The Maharaja also conferred on him the title of "Kaisar-ul-Iktidar" or chief of the exalted dignity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Latif; *History of the Punjab*, p. 458





**Sham Singh Atariwala** was another notable Sikh member of Lahore Durbar. He joined Ranjit Singh's service in 1803 and took a prominent part in most of the Maharaja's campaigns. He figured prominently in the battle of Sobraon in which he died a hero's death.

Bhai Gobind Ram and Bhai Ram Singh, sons of Bhai Wasti Ram, also regularly attended the court and were treated with great consideration.

### F. Hindu Chiefs

The Hindus, too, occupied conspicuous positions in the Lahore Durbar. Jamadar Khushal Singh, who held the charge of the 'Deorhi' Department, was the son of a Brahman shopkeeper of the Meerut District. He was the Maharaja's chamberlain and master of the ceremonies. He regulated processions and was the superintendent of the Durbar. Though the Maharaja liked him, he was not a popular figure in the Court. His colleagues hated him because they felt that the favours of the Maharaja had made him vain and haughty.

Khushal Singh's nephew, Tej Singh, too, held an important position in the Maharaja's Court.

Misr Diwan Chand, Diwan Mohkam Chand, Diwan Moti Ram, Diwan Ganga Ram, Diwan Bhawani Das, Misr Beli Ram, and Raja Dinanath whom Griffin styles as the "Talleyrand of the Punjab", were the other well-known Hindu luminaries of the Maharaja's Court.

## III

### Conclusion

Thus, the chief feature of the Court of Ranjit Singh was that it was cosmopolitan in character. Persons belonging to different races and religions were raised to high positions on no consideration other than merit. But considered from another point of view, this Court of Ranjit Singh proved to be one of the factors which led to the ruin of his State. The Lahore Court was heterogeneous in character. The Dogra Rajas, the Europeans and the Sikh Sardars did not see eye to eye with one another. So long as Ranjit Singh was there, these different sections in the Court worked well. But once the master-hand was removed, the mutual

jealousies of the Dogra Rajas, and the Sindhanwalia Sardars and the hatred of the natives for the Europeans led to those dirty and shameful intrigues which hastened the end of the Lahore State.

#### **Books For Further Study**

1. Steinbach : *The Punjab*
2. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*
3. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*
4. Osborne : *Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh*
5. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
6. McGregor : *History of the Sikhs*
7. Jacquement : *Letters from India*

## CHAPTER XXIII

### ADMINISTRATION OF RANJIT SINGH

#### I

#### Benevolent Despotism

In the pre-Ranjit Singh period, the Misls ruled over the Punjab. These Misls were 'theocratic aristocracies'. Ranjit Singh conquered the trans-Satluj Misls and replaced their system of administration by benevolent despotism. He was an absolute king and exercised complete sway over his people.<sup>1</sup> He had tamed all the big Sardars into subjection and had started inspecting their troops on the annual Dussehra festival. Through this annual review of troops, he effectively imposed his authority over them. Thus, no Sikh Sardar or other chief could claim equality with him. He appointed all the State officers at will. He exercised the royal prerogatives of coining money and making war and peace. He was the chief judge and no other person or court could question his judgement or decision. He collected and appropriated the revenue as he liked. In brief, he was the source of all power and authority in the State.

Although, in theory, Ranjit Singh was an absolute king, he was not 'the supreme embodiment of all the administrative and political authority'.<sup>2</sup> He had no blasting ego nor was he closed to reason. His advisers or ministers exercised a tremendous influence on him and sometimes the Maharaja, at their instance, even reversed his decisions and policy. Thus, for example, Faqir Aziz-ud-din, his foreign Minister, was greatly responsible for persuading the Maharaja to sign the Treaty of Amritsar, 1809. Similarly, When the Maharaja appointed Hari Singh Nalwa the Governor of Kashmir, some of his advisers, including Faqir-Aziz-ud-din, protested that the Nalwa Sardar was more capable as a

No Exercise of  
Arbitrary Authority  
over People

1. Steinbach : *The Punjab*, p. 56

2. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 134



commander<sup>1</sup> than as an administrator and, therefore, he should not be sent to Kashmir. The Nalwa Chief was a favourite of the Maharaja, but when his advisers insisted that he should be recalled, the Maharaja recalled him.

There were other great practical limitations to his authority. The Sikhs of the Punjab of those days were 'soldiers to a man' and Ranjit Singh, howsoever powerful, could not flout the opinion of the people. In his time, military courage was not the monopoly of the ruling caste. It was shared by the rank and file, and Ranjit Singh, fully conscious of it, never adopted a measure which could raise a storm. Some check was also provided by the order of the Akalis. The Akalis regarded themselves as the armed guardians of the Sikh religion. They often took law into their own hands. According to Sinha, they were a standing menace to the stability of Ranjit Singh's government and sometimes embroiled him in serious complications, but Ranjit Singh "dared not crush them, though he had means to do so. All that he could do was to moderate their fanaticism."

Besides, Ranjit Singh always regarded himself as the servant of the 'Khalsa' or 'the Sikh Commonwealth.' Sinha says, 'A drum which Guru Gobind Singh had constructed was named Ranjit and the one-eyed Sikh ruler also professedly regarded himself as nothing more than a mere drum of the commonwealth for the assertion of the political supremacy of the Khalsa.'

He always acted in the name of the Khalsa and he designated his Government as "Sarkar-i-Khalsaji". He did not take any high-sounding title and was generally addressed as 'Singh Sahib' or 'Sarkar' (impersonal title). His seal bore the inscription, "Akal Sahai" (God be our help) and not "Ranjit Sahai". Whenever any great victory was won, it was attributed to the grace of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The coins were also struck in the names of Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and were known as Nanak Shahi. He named the garden that he laid out at Amritsar after Guru Ram Dass (Ram Bagh) and similarly he called

1. It is said that Faqir Aziz-Ud-din told Ranjit Singh that if Hari Singh were to take charge of Kashmir, a batch of ploughs to level the flourishing towns of Kashmir should also be given to him.

2. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 135

the Amritsar Fort by the name of Gobindgarh, after the name of Guru Gobind Singh. An illustration given below clearly bears out how Ranjit Singh, although a despot, always considered himself a humble member of the great Khalsa Commonwealth.

Once he rode along in the company of Moran Courtesan through the streets of Lahore. This open violation of morality was greatly resented by the Akalis, and their leader, Phula Singh, denounced the Maharaja in an open assembly as if he were a criminal. It is said that the Akali leader summoned the Maharaja to Amritsar and ordered that he should be flogged. Ranjit Singh did not grumble and volunteered himself for the punishment. However, he was let off in view of his humility, despite his being a monarch.

From the above, it is clear that the Khalsa or Sikh Commonwealth was a sufficiently powerful entity and like the Scottish Kirk, any Sikh, acting in the name of the Sikh religion or Panth, could say or speak anything against the Maharaja. Thus, we can safely conclude that although Ranjit Singh was a despot, "he tempered his despotism by acting in the name and on behalf of the Khalsa". Besides, his despotism was a benevolent despotism, and Burnes, in his travels, writes, "He (Ranjit Singh) had applied himself to those improvements which spring only from great minds and here we find despotism without its rigours, a despot without cruelty and a system of Government beyond the native institutions of the East."

**Conclusion : Act-  
ed in the Name  
and on Behalf of  
the Khalsa**

## II

### Central Administration

As the Maharaja's system of government was of a despotic nature, the pivot of the whole administration was the person of the ruler. Round him, the whole administration revolved. Mostly, the initiative regarding the fundamentals of internal and foreign policy rested with him. It was entirely up to him whom to consult and whom not to consult.

**The Maharaja**

But it was humanly impossible for him to conduct the affairs

of the State personally. He was, therefore, assisted and advised by a number of counsellors or ministers. The most important of the ministers of Ranjit Singh was the Dogra Chief, Raja Dhian Singh who, along with his brothers Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh, exercised a tremendous influence on the Maharaja. Next to Dhian Singh was Faqir Aziz-ud-din. He was the most trusted adviser of Ranjit Singh and to a great extent determined the foreign policy of his master. Diwan Mohkam Chand, Misr Diwan Chand and Hari Singh Nalwa were, one after another, the confidants of the Maharaja in military affairs. Bhawani Das and Dina Nath managed the financial affairs of the State and the credit of setting up a sound financial system goes to them. The royal household was also an important office in those days and was generally given to a person of great trust. Fakir Nur-ud-din held that office for most of the time. Another important minister was Jamadar Khushal Singh. In the beginning, he held the charge of the *Deorhi*, but later on that important office was assigned to Raja Dhian Singh.

A salient feature of the central administration of Ranjit Singh was that there were a number of departments which kept all types of records including those of income and expenditure in the most systematic manner. This organization of the central administration into departments was done by Diwan Bhawani Das in 1808. In all, he set up twelve departments, the most important among them were :—

Central Departments

1. Daftar-i-Abwab-ul-Mal
2. Daftar-i-Taujihat
3. Daftar-i-Mawajab
4. Daftar-i-Roznamcha Kharch.

Daftar-i-Abwab-ul-Mal kept the records of income from land revenue and also other sources of revenue. Daftar-i-Taujihat kept the accounts of the expenditure of the royal household. It kept the records of Tosha Khana, royal harem or *Zenana*, etc. Daftar-i-Mawajab kept all the records relating to the payments in the form of salaries given to (a) Army (b) Civil servants and (c) Clerical Staff. Besides those departments, there was the Daftar-i-Roznamcha Kharch. It maintained the daily register of expenditure. Thus, we find that finance was wisely and properly controlled by the Maharaja and his *diwans*. The important *diwans*

of his period were Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Ganga Ram, and Diwan Dina Nath.

### III

#### Provincial or Local Administration

For the sake of administrative convenience, Ranjit Singh had divided his kingdom into four *Subas* or provinces. They were :

- (1) Suba-i-Lahore
- (2) Suba-i-Kashmir, also called Janat Nazir
- (3) Suba-i-Multan or Dar-ul-Aman
- (4) Suba-i-Peshawar.

The head of the province or *Suba* was called Nazim and Nazimship was generally given to men in whom the Maharaja had great confidence. Multan, after its conquest, was given to Sukh Dayal Khatri and later on to Sawan Mal. Kashmir after its annexation was handed over to Diwan Moti Ram, son of Diwan Mohkam Chand; and Peshawar, when its administration was directly taken over by the Maharaja, was given to Hari Singh Nalwa. Some of the provinces, such as Lahore and Multan, were well administered<sup>1</sup>. But the Subas of Kashmir and Peshawar were known for mal-administration. The Governors of those two provinces (Kashmir and Peshawar) were often taken to task by the Maharaja for their inefficiency and corruption.

Although some of the contemporaneous writers, like Steinbach<sup>2</sup>, clearly mention that Ranjit Singh's country was divided into provinces, some of the historians are of the opinion that Ranjit Singh divided his kingdom into districts which were directly administered or leased out. This much, however, is certain that there were seven major districts. We cannot say definitely whether those districts were independent or sub-divisions of a province. Each district was held by a *Kardar* or Collector. He was mainly a revenue official and his chief duty was to collect revenue and deposit it in the

See Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*, pp. 148-150. In the centre and south-west, the Sikh rule was stronger and more stable.

See Steinbach : *The Punjab*, p. 56. A letter of Ranjit Singh, written to the Marwar Chief also mentions that provinces were the units of administration under Ranjit Singh.



State treasury. The Maharaja was very particular that the *Kardars* should be vigilant and efficient in the collection of revenue, and it was said that "a *Kardar* in arrears was an offender almost beyond the hope of pardon". The *Kardars* also collected the duties and taxes which were imposed on various articles and remitted the amount to the Maharaja. The *Kardar* was not only a revenue officer but also a judicial and administrative officer. He decided the day-to-day cases. For most offences, he would impose fines because it was his great concern that his office should be as paying as possible. The *Kardar* was also responsible for maintaining law and order in his locality. He was also required to carry out the royal decrees which concerned his locality.

It is often said that the *Kardar* extorted every possible penny from the peasant and left very little with him. But this view is not correct. The condition of the peasants greatly deteriorated during the period of anarchy which followed the death of Ranjit Singh. In his period, the peasants were quite well off.

The lowest unit of administration was a village or 'Mauza'. In the villages, the *Panchayats* continued throughout Ranjit Singh's period and the Maharaja was shrewd enough not to disturb the rights and privileges of those old self-governing institutions.

Besides, there were large tracts of land in his kingdom which were not directly administered by Ranjit Singh. They were held by the big Chiefs or Sardars of the State. When they offered their submission, they were given *Jagirs* at places away from their original possessions which were confiscated. In those *Jagirs*, the Sardars or the Chiefs enjoyed vast powers. They directly controlled those lands and exercised wide jurisdiction over the people inhabiting those areas.

The City of Lahore had an independent system of government. The whole city was divided into *mohallas* or quarters and the most influential person living in that *mohalla* was made responsible for maintaining law and order therein. The Chief Police officer of Lahore was called 'Kotwal' who enjoyed vast powers. He was generally a Muslim. One of the well-known Kotwals of Ranjit Singh's times was Imam Bakhsh who was generally called *Khar-Sawar* (donkey-rider) by the people.

There also used to be a *Qazi* in Lahore for trying civil cases of its Muslim population.

#### IV

#### Land Revenue

The main source of Ranjit Singh's income was land revenue. Out of the total revenue of about two and a half crores of rupees, the amount of more than one crore and seventy-five lacs was contributed by the peasants.

**Total Land Revenue:**  
**Rs. 1,75,00,000**

The Lahore Kingdom under Ranjit Singh did not have one uniform system of assessment. But in the earlier period and in the greater part of the State, *Batal* or 'sharing' was the popular system. The revenue collectors, at the end of each harvest, would go to the cultivators and take the State share in kind. That was a cumbersome system, and so in the later period, Ranjit Singh adopted two other systems, 'Kankut' or appraisal and *ijaradari* or farming. According to the former, the Government made an estimate of the gross produce while the crops were still standing, and according to the latter, the land under assessment was given on contract to the highest bidder for three to six years. The bidder was required to submit a detailed report of the produce and the money collected from the cultivators.

**Methods of Assessment—**  
**Batal, Kan-kut**  
**and Bidding**

The unit for assessment was either a *bigha* or a plough. While estimating the standing crops or sharing the actual produce, the revenue officers and the higher government officers first formed an idea of the yield of each crop per *bigha* or per plough and, in that way, kept an eye on the dealings of the lower revenue officials and the cultivators.

**Basis—Bigha**  
**or Plough**

Regarding the government share in the produce of the land, the writers of the period have expressed divergent opinions. According to Lord Lawrence, the State took two-fifths from the peasants holding more productive lands, but one-fourth or one-fifth from those having less productive lands. Sir Lepel Griffin says that Ranjit Singh charged one-half of the gross produce from the land and, in addition thereto, levie

**State Demand**

several other cesses<sup>1</sup>. The Maharaja's recent biographer Dr N.K. Sinha, says that there are instances in which as much as 50 per cent was demanded from the cultivator.<sup>2</sup> Dr G.L. Chopra who has made a careful and critical study of the institutions of Ranjit Singh says that the government's share was not uniform. It varied according to the nature of the crops and according to the irrigation facilities provided to the cultivators. Dr Chopra and Sinha are of the view that from fertile and rich lands, sometimes the State demand was as high as fifty per cent, but it was never below one-third from any type of land.<sup>3</sup>

Land revenue was collected twice a year. At the end of each harvest, i.e. in May and October, the revenue collectors, under the directions of *Kardars*, approached the village officials—Muqadams and Chaudhries—collect the land revenue in kind or in cash.

**Collection of Land Revenue** It was the duty of the *Kardar* of the area to see that all the revenue was collected at the proper time and was remitted to the State Treasury.

The income from the land tax or 'Malia' for all the four *Subas* amounted to Rs. 1,75,57,741, which was distributed as follows: Lahore, 1,14,94,221; Multan, 27,26,300; Kashmir, 21,15,590 and Peshawar, 12,21,630.<sup>4</sup>

This land revenue system of Ranjit Singh has been criticized by some of the English writers. For example, Sir Lepel Griffin says that the Maharaja "squeezed out of the unhappy peasant every rupee that he could be made to disgorge," but at the same time, he did not kill the goose that laid the golden egg but he plucked its feathers as closely as he dared".<sup>5</sup> Sir Robert Egerton says, "that Sikh population were soliders to a man and their main object was to wring from the Hindu and Mohammanan cultivators the utmost farthing that could be extorted without compelling them to abandon their fields."

**A Critical Study of the Land Revenue Policy of Ranjit Singh (I) Tax Very Heavy**

Even Dr N.K. Sinha and Payne admit that the State demand

1. Sinha, N. K. : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 145
2. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 140
3. *Ibid.*, p. 140
4. S. R. Kohli : *Fateh Nama Guru Khalsa Ji Ka*, p. 42
5. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 144

was very exorbitant. But they differ with Griffin who says that on account of this heavy charge, the condition of the farmers was the most abject and pitiful. Payne says, "People were, of course, heavily taxed but they were not taxed out of existence. If he took much from them, he gave them in return what was well worth the price." Dr. Sinha writes :

(ii) But Ranjit Singh Gave much in Return

"The revenues of the country might have been strained by his system of taxation but in some respects the Government gave back with one hand what its took with the other. The employments of the State were numerous and every Jat village sent recruits for the army, who sent their savings homes."

Besides, the Maharaja was not a tyrant and did not extort money simply because he wanted to trouble the people. He was very anxious for the welfare of the peasants and there are a number of instances when he distributed grain among the peasants for sowing and subsistence. For example, when there occurred a great famine in Kashmir, he sent ass-loads of wheat to the people to be distributed free. We also find Ranjit Singh often punishing his soldiers for destroying the standing crops of the farmers contrary to his standing instructions.

(iii) The Maharaja Was Anxious about the Welfare of the Peasants

Besides the land tax, there were a number of other sources of income. Griffin says that duties were levied under 48 heads on every article of use. Sinha writes that "Ranjit's taxation embraced everything, every locality, every thoroughfare, every town and village and every article, whether sold, imported or exported". Besides the Customs duties, Ranjit Singh levied salt-tax ; and the income from this head was credited under the head "Kan-i-Namak." More than six lacs of rupees was collected as income from *Nazranas*. The *jagirs* yielded the highest amount, next to land revenue, which was more than nine lacs of rupees.

Other Sources of Revenue

## V

### Law and Justice

Ranjit Singh's judicial system did not differ much from the



**Ranjit Singh's  
Judicial System  
not Much Devel-  
oped**

system which he had inherited from the Misls. In his days, 'Justice' was not so much a national as a local concern. Custom and caprice were the substitutes for legal codes. Besides, like the Sikh Sardars of the Misl Period, Ranjit Singh also regarded justice as a source of income and fines were levied in almost all cases. Wherever and whenever he found a chance to raise money in dispensing justice, he would do it.

**The Maharaja  
Was a Just  
Sovereign**

But this does not mean that the Maharaja was not a just sovereign. He was very particular about justice. Like most of the oriental despots, he regarded the dispensation of justice as one of his foremost duties. He made extensive tours and heard appeals. He severely took to task the Governors of those regions in which too many appeals were made to him.<sup>1</sup> A number of stories are still current in the Punjab, which describe Ranjit Singh's love for justice. He would often hold a court and hear appeals made against the decisions and judgments of *Nazims* and *Kardars*. He himself had the highest powers. He could reverse the decisions completely. He could completely pardon a man. He would often undertake tours and see that his judicial officers were discharging their duties properly and efficiently.

**Adalat-i-Ala &  
Adalti Courts**

In the important towns, the Maharaja had set up courts of justice. For example, there was an *Adalat-i-Ala* or a High Court at Lahore. Very little is known of its constitution and jurisdiction. But it is held that most of the appeals against the decisions of the lower courts—the *Kardars'* courts and the *Nazims'* courts—were heard firstly by this court ; and then, if the wronged person was not satisfied, he could take his appeal to the Maharaja. Besides the 'Adalat-i-Ala', at certain places, Ranjit Singh had set up certain judicial tribunals or *Adalti* Courts in addition to the regular Courts—the *Nazims'* Courts and the *Kardars'* Courts. For example, he established *Adalti* Courts at Amritsar and Peshawar. Those special courts heard both civil and criminal cases.

The day-to-day justice in Ranjit Singh's kingdom was administered by three types of courts—the *Nazims'* Courts, *Kardars'*

1. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 146

**Nazims' Courts, Kardars' Courts and the Panchayats** Courts and the *Panchayats*. In the district towns, justice was dispensed by the *Kardar* who heard both civil and criminal cases. He also decided important revenue disputes. At provincial headquarters, the *Nazim* held a court which generally heard criminal cases. But in the villages, justice was administered by the *Panchayats* which tried to settle disputes by way of arbitration.

**Jagirdar's Court** The Sikh Sardars or the Muslim dependent Chiefs who held vast *jagirs* all enjoyed vast judicial powers. In their areas, they judged both civil and criminal cases. The people in those areas could, if they desired, appeal to the Maharaja for justice

**Law** Regarding law, there was no recognized code for the guidance of the Courts. The judges were required to decide the cases according to customary law or in the light of their common sense. Steinbach, therefore, says that 'custom and caprice were substituted for the *lex-scripta*'.

**Punishment** The penal code of Ranjit Singh was not very severe. Imprisonments were rare and capital punishment was unknown. Mutilation of limbs was often resorted to ; but even in that kind of penalty, money could compensate. Steinbach says, "A tolerable bag full of rupees is often accepted as compensation in full for the retention of a limb or a feature."<sup>1</sup>

**Justice as a Source of Income** But the most remarkable feature of Ranjit Singh's judicial administration was that most of the crimes, sometimes even serious crimes, were atoned for by fines or *jurmana*, levied according to the means of the offender. But it must be remembered that it was not only the criminal alone who paid. When the innocence of an arraigned individual deprived the judge of a pretext for lodging a heavy impost, he exacted from the prisoner a present of gratitude called "*Shookrana*." Sometimes the money was charged on the plea that the parties had consumed the time of the judge for nothing. Similarly, when any stolen property was discovered, the owner had to pay one-fourth of the amount involved in the theft to the court before it was restored to him.<sup>2</sup>

1. Steinbach : *The Punjab*, p. 72

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73

## VI

## Military Administration

**Military Reform of Ranjit Singh** Ranjit Singh was a great military organizer. In 1822 he employed two European officers, Allard and Ventura, who had served under Napoleon and were, thus, fully conversant with the most up-to-date methods of warfare and military organization. With their assistance and that of other European officers who joined later, the Maharaja replaced the old Sikh troops of the Misl by a disciplined and well-equipped army. That thing he achieved through the following reforms :—

- (1) Reorganizing the infantry on Western lines
- (2) Introducing European drill and discipline
- (3) Maintaining heavy artillery
- (4) Introducing the monthly payment system—*Mahdari*, in imitation of the British Military System.

In the pre-Ranjit Singh period, i.e. during the days of the Misl, the main strength of the Sikh forces was cavalry. A soldier without a horse was never considered a soldier. On horseback, the Sikhs used to give the toughest fight, but on foot they never made much impression. Besides, the cavalry used to go and fight against the enemy, whereas the infantry was left behind to garrison the forts and to look after the women and the property. But Ranjit Singh learnt from General Ventura that infantry could also become a most formidable body of troops. Accordingly, the Maharaja carried out a number of important reforms by which the infantry became, by the year 1834, the strongest and most efficient of all the arms of Ranjit Singh. Most of those reforms in the organization of Infantry were carried out under the instructions of General Ventura who was put in charge of the Infantry in 1822.

Besides, Ranjit Singh found that one of the greatest defects of the Indian armies, owing to which they had suffered defeats at the hands of the British, was that they had never been subjected to regular drill and discipline. Thus, after thoroughly mastering the secret of the superiority of the British organization against which all the military races of India had tried their strength in

(ii)  
**Regular Drill  
and Discipline**

vain, Ranjit Singh decided to build up an army on similar lines. The Sikhs, however, first resisted the rigidity of military training and scoffed at it, calling it the dance of the dancing-girls—'Raqs-e-Looluan'. But the Maharaja soon overcame all opposition and instructed his European officers to go ahead and organize his troops on Western lines. Consequently, the European officers gave a moderate degree of precision and completeness to the military system of the Sikhs. The soldiers began to be called up for regular hours for drill. French words of command were introduced. The number in the units of the army was definitely fixed. The soldiers were given regular training in handling the latest weapons of war, and regular instructions were given in military manoeuvres.

The Sikhs knew very little of heavy artillery before the days of Ranjit Singh. The Maharaja, however, with the assistance of European officers, Court and Gardner, organized a Heavy Artillery regular Artillery Department. From 1827 to 1834, a number of important reforms were carried out in the Artillery Department. The Maharaja even set up a number of workshops at Amritsar to cast heavy guns. Thus, heavy artillery also became a highly organized and efficient wing of his army.

Another important reform of Ranjit Singh was that he fixed the monthly salary of his soldiers and generals and began to pay them regularly. Before him, the Sikh soldiers depended mainly on loot and plunder and so, after a victory, committed all types of atrocities in order to enrich themselves. The Maharaja was greatly impressed to see the 'Mahadari' system in the British Army and, consequently, adopted it. A soldier in the infantry was paid rupees seven a month, whereas a horseman was paid rupees twenty-five per mensem; but it was out of that sum of twenty-five rupees that he was to provide himself with a horse, arms and equipment. The pay of the soldiers of the Lahore Army, according to Steinbach, was higher than that of the sepoys employed in the British Army.<sup>1</sup> But one of the serious defects of that system was that the pay of the soldiers was generally in arrears.

1. Steinbach : *The Punjab*, p. 60



## ARMY

The army of Ranjit Singh consisted of the following :

- I. Fauj-i-Ain or Regular Army or Fauj-i-Qawaid
- II. Fauj-i-Be-Qawaid or Irregular Army.

The Maharaja organized a special brigade, the Fauj-i-Khas or model brigade, incorporating what was the best in the European system. This represented the cream of his regular army. It was commanded by General Ventura and was often employed in the frontier wars against Afghanistan. It consisted of four battalions of infantry—The Gurkha *Paltan* (707 men), the *Khas Paltan* (820 men), the *Sham Sota Paltan* (810 men) and *Dewa Singh Paltan* (839 men)<sup>1</sup> and three regiments of cavalry—a grenadier regiment of 730 men, a dragoon regiment of 750 men and a troop of life-guards comprising 187 men. The artillery of the Fauj-i-Khas was the corps of *Ilahi Bakhsh* or 'Ilahi Bakhsh ka Topkhana'.

The Fauj-i-Ain or the Regular army of Ranjit Singh consisted of infantry, cavalry and artillery. It consisted of 75,000 soldiers, out of which 60,000 comprised the infantry and the remaining belonged to the cavalry and artillery. Thus, the bulk of this regular army was infantry which, as has been already described, was re-organized by Ventura. In course of time, it became the best fighting army of Ranjit Singh. The organization of the infantry was like this. It was divided into units called *paltans* or battalions. Each *paltan* was placed under a commander. These *paltans* were divided into companies; and companies, into platoon sections. The head of a section was called 'Havaladar.'

Besides the infantry, there was the '*rasala*' or cavalry. Though it was not as efficient as the infantry, it consisted of a fine body of men in appearance, equipment and discipline. It was placed under General Allard. The strength of the *Rasala* in 1811 was 1209. In 1838, 4090 and in 1845, 6235<sup>2</sup>. The *Rasala* was divided into regiments or *rajmans*'. Steinbach says that that branch of the army was inferior in every respect to the infantry.

1. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 141

2. Balwant Singh : *The Army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*

As already mentioned, Ranjit Singh had come to realize the importance of maintaining a heavy artillery. With the assistance of Court and Gardner, Ranjit Singh set up a number of foundries at Lahore which used to cast fine types of heavy guns. Osborne writing about Ranjit Singh's artillery, says, "He (Ranjit Singh) is very proud of the efficiency and admirable condition of his artillery and justly so, for corps. His heavy artillery consisted of :—

Artillery—Court  
and Gardner

Branches of  
Artillery

- (a) Top-Khanna-i-Shutri—Big guns drawn by camels
- (b) Top-Khana-i-Fili—Heavy guns drawn by elephants
- (c) Top-Khanna-i-Aspi—Guns drawn by horses
- (d) Top-Khana-i-Gawai—Guns drawn by bullocks.

Each gun had its own individual name such as 'Fateh Jang', 'Jang-i-bijli', etc. Most of the high offices of the artillery were held by foreigners—Europeans and Turks. Court, Gardner, Ilahi Bakhsh and Qadar Bakhsh held very high positions in that department. About 10,000 persons were employed in the artillery.

Regarding the number of the heavy guns, at the time of Ranjit's accession to the throne, the entire Sikh Army did not have more than forty guns and those, too, were of poor quality. In 1820, Ranjit Singh was able to have one hundred and twenty-two guns and 190 swivels. And by 1838-39, the number had risen to 188 guns and 280 swivels. After his death, it rose to 380 field guns and 308 swivels.

The irregular army or the *Fauj-i-Be-Qawaid* consisted of three different types—the *Ghorcharas*, the *Jagirdari* cavalry and the *Akalis*. The *Ghorcharas* were further sub-divided into *Ghorchara Khas* and *Misaldar Sawars*. The soldiers in *Ghorchara Khas* regiments were recruited from the families of the old Sikh Sardars. The *Ghorchara Khas* did not undergo any training or drill. Rather, they were organized on the model of the old Khalsa Army, i.e. the horsemen of the days of the Sikh confederacies or *Misls* who

Fauj-i-Be-Qwaid,  
The Ghorcharas  
and Misaldar  
Sawars

1. Osborne : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 60
2. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 143

believed that the dash of a cavalry charge and reckless courage were enough to overwhelm the foe. The *Ghorcharas* were paid very decent salaries. In the beginning, they were paid in *jagirs* to the value of Rs. 300 to 400 a year. But later on cash payments were made to them. The *Misaldar Sawars* did not enjoy the same dignified position as the *Ghorcharas Khas* did. They were those horsemen who, after the over-throw of their masters, had joined the service of the Maharaja. Unlike the *Ghorcharas Khas*, they were not the sons and relative of the old Sikh Sardars, but were the ex-soldiers of the Sikh Misls. The total strength of the *Gorcharas*—both *Khas* and *Misaldar Sawars*—was nearly 10,000.

Besides, the *Jagirdars* who held land from Ranjit Singh furnished a certain number of well-equipped troopers to the Maharaja.

**Jagirdari Contingents** Ranjit Singh used to inspect those *Jagirdari* contingents at the time of Dussehra festival. He did not employ those contingents in important battles, as they were never considered to be as efficient as the rest of his forces.

In addition to the *Ghorcharas* and the *Jagirdari Fauj*, Ranjit Singh maintained a small force of Akalis. According to Steinhach,

**The Akalis** their number was between two and three thousand. They fought with religious fanaticism. They hated the foreigners, particularly the Europeans and the Afghans. They used to fight with desperation and were always employed upon the most dangerous tasks. Some of their leaders, such as Akali Phula Singh and Akali Sadhoo Singh, showed uncommon intrepidity and valour. Steinbach gives the following description about their arms. "They move about constantly armed to the teeth, insulting every body they meet, particularly the Europeans (as they hated the foreigners, therefore Steinbach writes in this tone) and it is not an uncommon thing to see them moving about with a drawn sword in each hand, two more in their belt, a matchlock at their back and three or four quoits fastened round their turbans. The quiot (steel ring) is an arm peculiar to this race of people."

Some writers like Osborne have greatly praised the 'New Army' raised by Ranjit Singh. They say that it was due to his reforms, particularly the introduction of Western drill and discipline that the army of Ranjit Singh became so powerful that later on it baffled even the British in the First and the Second Sikh Wars. But there are others who say that Ranjit Singh, by giving up the

old traditional methods of warfare (guerilla tactics and fighting with religious fervour) and by disbanding the old Sikh levies, brought about the ruin of his State. The writers belonging to the later school of thought say that mostly the conquests of Ranjit Singh were effected before 1822 when the new army had not yet been organized and, therefore, it cannot be said on any basis of experience that the New Army was in any way superior to the old one. Besides, the employment of European officers in the Army was not hailed by the Sikhs and other Punjabis. The Akalis hated them. Prince Kharak Singh protested against the influence of the European generals on the Maharaja. Moreover, some of the old Sikh veterans still preferred a share in the booty to the monthly payment or 'Mahadari' system. The *Ghorcharas* and the Akalis detested 'drills' and 'parades' which they styled as *raqas-e-looluan* and considered harmful for the manly Sikh soldiers.

#### **Books for Further Study**

1. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*
2. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*
3. G. L. Chopra : *Punjab as a Sovereign State*
4. Balwant Singh : *Army of Ranjit Singh*
5. Steinbach : *The Punjab*
6. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
7. Cunningham : *A Short History of the Sikhs*
8. Osborne : *Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh*
9. Sohan Lal Suri : *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*
10. Fauja Singh : *Military System of the Sikhs*



## CHAPTER XXIV

# THE MAHARAJA—HIS PERSONALITY AND PLACE IN HISTORY

### I.

#### Personality

**Ranjit Singh**  
**Loved by His**  
**Subjects**

Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab, was very much loved by his subjects. Sir Lepel Griffin, writing about fifty years after the death of the Maharaja, says, "Although half a century has passed since his death, his name is still a household word in the province; his portrait is still preserved in castle and cottage. It is a favourite subject with the ivory painters of Amritsar and Delhi."<sup>1</sup>

**Physical Features**  
**of Ranjit Singh**

Ranjit Singh was certainly very popular and possessed many talents. But he was not handsome. Baron Hugel who met the Maharaja gives the following description of his physical features: "I must call him the most ugly and unprepossessing man I saw throughout the Punjab. His left eye which is quite closed disfigures him less than the other, which is always rolling about wide open and is much distorted by disease. The scars of the smallpox on his face do not run into one another but form so many dark pits in his greyish-brown skin; his short straight nose is swollen at the tip; the skinny lips are stretched tight over his teeth which are still good... He has a thick muscular neck, thin arms and legs, the left foot and left arm drooping, and small well-formed hands."<sup>2</sup>

**Though not**  
**Handsome. He**  
**Commanded**  
**Great Respect**

Though disfigured and short-statured, Ranjit Singh exercised complete control over all his subjects, including his brilliant Court of fierce and turbulent chiefs. Once an English officer in the train of Lord William Bentinck asked Fakir Aziz-ud-din, the Foreign Minister of Ranjit Singh of which eye the Maharaja was blind. The Fakir's answer to the question clearly bears out the respect which the Maharaja commanded from his close associates. He said,

1. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 88

2. *Ibid.*, p. 89

**"The splendour of his face is such that I have never been able to look close enough to discover."**

**Ranjit Singh, says Griffin, was 'the beau ideal of a soldier—strong, spare, active, courageous and enduring'. He was an excellent horseman and an accomplished swordsman.**  
**The Beau Ideal of a Soldier** In 1831, at the famous Ropar meeting, the Maharaja performed such feats of swordsmanship and competed with Skinner's Horse in tent-pegging in a manner that excited the applause of the Governor-General and other British military generals present there. One of the feats of the Maharaja is worth mentioning. A brass vessel was laid on the ground and three times the Maharaja lifted it with the tip of his drawn sword, the horse going at full speed. Besides, he personally guided the operations of most of his important military expeditions. He also had shown conspicuous personal bravery at Nowshera and remarkable tenacity at Mankera.

**Besides, he had a great capacity for work. Munshi Shamat Ali Khan<sup>1</sup>, a contemporary, tells us how from early morning till late in the evening the Maharaja had a busy and active life.**  
**Very Active** Like Sher Shah, he always followed the principle, "It behoves the great to be always active." He knew every detail "and with his indefatigable capacity for work, he would give suggestion and guidance on minute points". He generally himself guided his expert secretaries in writing the important letters.

**Ranjit Singh also had a prodigious memory. Jacquemont tells us that "he knew the name, position and history of from ten to twelve thousand villages in his kingdom".<sup>2</sup> He was also very inquisitive and whenever any foreigner came to his Court, he would ask him a hundred thousand questions ranging "from war to wine, and from learning to hunting with breathless rapidity" He would often enquire from the Europeans about their native countries and their military resources and methods of warfare. The Maharaja was so inquisitive that, according to Sinha, his conversation was a nightmare even to a man of the intellectual capacity of Jacquemont".**  
**Inquisitive, Mind and a Prodigious Memory**

1. Shamat Ali Khan visited the Court of Ranjit Singh in 1838. He is the author of the well-known work *Sikhs and Afghans*.
2. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 182

Moreover, Ranjit Singh was a great statesman. His political sagacity is shown in his maintaining friendly relations with the British. He had realized that the British were safe friends and very dangerous foes; and it was due to this fact that he did not expose the kingdom he had created to the risks of a war with them and chose, instead, to confine his activities to the north-west of the Satluj. Besides, he was a very good judge of men and always chose his ministers and officials wisely. It was because of this faculty that he succeeded in building up a State in such troublesome and violent times.

#### His Political Sagacity

Although Ranjit Singh himself had received little or no education, he did his best to further the cause of education in every possible manner. He used to give grants and assign rent-free lands to the *pathshalas* and *madrasas* which imparted elementary education to the children in those days. It is said that Ranjit Singh, at one stage, decided to start an English School; but, eventually, the scheme did not materialize.<sup>1</sup>

#### Patron of Learning

Some of the well-known literary figures who were liberally patronized by the Maharaj were Munshi Sohan Lal, Mian Shah Muhammad, Diwan Amar Nath and Ganesh Das. Munshi Sohan Lal was the Court historian of Ranjit Singh and is the author of the famous Persian work "*Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*" which gives us a very vivid description of the Maharaja and the Lahore Durbar. Diwan Amar Nath wrote his famous *Zafar Nama* at the instance of Ranjit Singh. Ganesh Das wrote *Fateh Nama Guru Khalsa ji Ka* which gives in Punjabi verse a vivid description of the Multan and Peshawar campaigns of the Maharaja.

#### Literary Figures of His Court

Another praiseworthy trait of Ranjit Singh's character was that he was a devout Sikh. Shamat Ali tells us that the Maharaja had set apart some time in his daily routine to the hymns of the *Holy Granth*. Before undertaking important military expeditions, he would often go to holy men like Baba Sahib Singh Bedi and seek their blessings. After a great victory, he generally made rich offerings at the Golden Temple,

#### A Devout Sikh

1. The Missionaries wanted that they should teach Bible in the new English School ; hence the scheme did not materialize.

**Amritsar.** Ranjit Singh always regarded himself as nothing more than a mere drum of Guru Gobind Singh for the assertion of the political supremacy of the Khalsa. He always acted in the name of the Khalsa. On his seals, he had the inscription, "Akal Sahai" (i. e. God, the helper of Ranjit). Once, the Maharaja, while paying a visit to the Golden Temple inadvertently violated certain rules. He at once offered himself for punishment as he always regarded himself as a true servant of the Khalsa. He did not use any high-sounding royal titles, but was satisfied with a simple title, 'Singh Sahib.'

A portion of the income from octroi of Amritsar City was set apart for the daily "Karah Parshad" (a food preparation of ghee, flour and sugar) which was distributed in the Golden Temple every day. Besides, it was at his expence that the golden dome of the Golden Temple was built. He also spent levishly on the temples of Jawala Mukhi and Taran Taran.

Though a devout Sikh, Ranjit Singh followed the policy of toleration towards other religions. As noted earlier, some of his closest associates did not belong to the Sikh religion. The Faqir brothers, the Dogra Rajas and Brahmans Khushal Singh and Taj Singh occupied more trusted positions than the persons of his own community did. Griffin, however, says that "the tolerance of the Maharaja was due rather to indifference and selfishness than to any enlightened sentiment". But "whatever the origin", continues the same author, "the liberalism of the Maharaja had an excellent effect upon his administration"<sup>1</sup>. It has now been realized by the present Indian Government that the only safe policy in this country inhabited by men of different creeds is the policy of 'secularism', and Ranjit Singh deserves credit because he made this discovery a century before and by adopting this wise policy succeeded in establishing a popular monarchy in the Punjab.

But Ranjit Singh was not without faults. He was addicted to opium and wine and also took great delight in the company of dancing-girls. He showed special interest in Moran and Gul Begum. Like other monarchs, he placed the interests of the State above moral considerations. The manner in which he secured the famous

**His Religious  
Tolerance**

**Political Consi-  
derations Out-  
weigh Moral  
Considerations**

1. Griffin : Ranjit Singh, p. 144



Koh-i-Noor and his favourite horses such as 'Laili' from their masters and the way he broke his pledged word to gain his political ends support the above statement.

Despite these shortcomings, Ranjit Singh was a born ruler. Griffin says, "Men obeyed him by instinct and because they had no power to disobey. The control which he exercised, even in the closing years of his life, over the whole Sikh people, nobles and priests, was the measure of his greatness". At another place, the same writer says, "He was great because he possessed in an extraordinary degree the qualities without which the highest success cannot be attained; and the absence of the commonplace virtues which belong to the average citizen, neither diminished nor affected in any way the distinction of his character".<sup>1</sup>

Conclusion :  
A Born Ruler

## II

### Estimate of Ranjit Singh's Work

Now the question arises why Ranjit Singh, though endowed with great qualities, failed to build up an enduring State. The reasons of his failure were twofold—those for which he can be personally held responsible and those which were beyond his control.

In the first instance, Ranjit Singh is generally described as a 'supreme example of an intellect without a conscience'. Through force, stratagem and political sagacity, he certainly built up a State. But he 'did not breathe into the hearts of his people any noble sentiment that would have held them together after his death.' Secondly, Ranjit Singh had centralized every thing and, consequently, when death removed him from the scene "not a vacancy but a void was caused" and in this void perished the fabric of Ranjit Singh. Thirdly, Ranjit Singh did not subordinate the military authority to the civil authority. Sinha says, "He left the *jagirdars* weak and the army too powerful for his weak successors to control."

Personal  
Responsibility of  
Ranjit's Failure  
to Build up an  
Enduring State

Besides, all his great generals—Misr Diwan Chand, Mohkam Chand and Hari Singh Nalwa—died during his lifetime. Sinha

1. Griffin : Ranjit Singh, p. 91

says that only crafty and designing men, either weaklings or traitors, survived to command his forces. Naturally, the army grew out of control...and the Punjab became a scene of the wildest disorder.

But the most important cause of the failure of Ranjit Singh in founding an enduring State lies in his relations with the British Government. Ranjit Singh had realized that war with the British was certain. Instead of postponing it to some future date, he should have acted boldly. In his relations with the British he 'was all hesitancy and indecision.' In his alliance with the British, Ranjit Singh played the role of a horse, while the British acted as the rider and that was his fundamental mistake. When he knew that a collision between him and the British was certain, he should have taken the risk and ought to have waged war against them during his lifetime. When he died and the crash came, there was no strong hand left to keep the British away.

Thus, it is important to note that Ranjit Singh's failure was inherent in the very logic of events. The East India Company had swallowed too many camels to strain at this gnat. The British Imperialists had, even before the death of Ranjit Singh, decided to annex the Punjab. Sooner or later, they would have definitely annexed the Punjab. It is, therefore, said that just as no State had the right to exist independently in the heyday of the Roman Imperialism, similarly in the heyday of British Imperialism, the Punjab of Ranjit Singh had no future. Ranjit Singh made a mistake in not measuring his strength with the British during his own lifetime. After his death, there was none who could play the role which even Ranjit Singh had not dared to play. It is, often, said, "All causes that were not the cause of Rome were destined to be lost. The central power, once dominant, could only grow and all the outside forces could only shatter themselves against Rome as enemies or augment the strength of Rome as vassals"<sup>1</sup>.

### **Books for Further Study**

1. Griffin : *Ranjit Singh*
2. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*
3. Latif : *History of the Punjab*

1. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*, p. 192

4. Hugel : *Travels*
5. Steinbech : *The Punjab*
6. McGregor : *History of Sikhs*
7. Osborne : *The Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh*

## CHAPTER XXV

### PUNJAB IN RANJIT SINGH'S TIME

#### I

#### Social Conditions

**Introduction** A number of foreigners visited the Court of Lahore during the first half of the nineteenth century. The most prominent among those are Moorcroft, Murray, Burnes, Baron Hugel, and Jacquemont. Besides giving us some interesting information about the Maharaja and his civil and military institutions, some of them have even described the social and economic aspects of the life of the people of those days. From the writings of these foreign visitors, we can easily form an idea of the society of Ranjit Singh's time.

**Population** First, let us take the people. Burnes says that the total population of the Punjab, excluding Kashmir and Ladakh, was in the neighbourhood of 3,500,000. This number was not based on any regular census, but it was simply Burnes' computation. This population, according to Steinbach, a contemporary was "composed of a great variety of races and religions, but the bulk may be said to be divided into Hindus and Mohammadans, the former being in proportion of three to one of the latter."<sup>1</sup> Of course, the Hindus included the Sikhs. Regarding the Sikhs, Steinbach writes :

**Sikhs—Healthy and Handsome** "The Sikhs, or the Punjabis...are a handsome race of men, resembling Hindus in general, but with a finer muscular development and a more robust appearance (arising from the superiority of diet) than the people of British India allow themselves."

The foreign writers also tell us about the dress and diet of the people of those days. The men used to wear jackets and trousers, and turbans formed their head-gear. The dress of the women consisted of wide trousers, and an upper garment of the frock type. They used a shawl or scarf in the cold season.

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1. Steinbach : *The Punjab*, p. 75



Regarding the diet of the Punjabis of those days, rice or wheat flour (*attah*) constituted their staple food. They were also fond of milk, vegetables and fruits. The Sikhs and Mohammadans, on the whole, were meat-eaters. But beef was interdicted in

**Dress and Diet** Ranjit Singh's dominions. The people of those days, particularly the Sikhs, were very much given to drinking, and to *bhang* and opium-eating. A contemporary Englishman writes that normally a Sikh could 'resist potations, pottle deep of a fiery spirit, a very small dose of which would overthrow an English man.' Ranjit Singh himself drank like a fish and once he declared that "there was only one British Officer who could approach him in the copiousness of his libations to Bacchus."

Beggary was a common evil of those days. Steinbach says "Charity to faqirs constitutes almost their only good quality and even this is the result of superstition... Offerings of grain and money are deposited in the temples and each of these edifices has a corps of 'chillas' or licensed beggars attached to it... Each village contributes a sum called 'Mulha' which is dispensed to wandering beggars and necessitous strangers. Sometimes, small parcels of land are assigned to professional mendicants."<sup>1</sup>

Captain Murray gives us a vivid description of the various customs and social practices of the people of those days. Regarding the customs of succession among the Sikhs, he describes the rules of succession prevailing both in the 'Majha' and the 'Malwa' tracts of the Punjab. The succession among the Majha Sikhs was governed by two systems—'Bhai Bund' and 'Choonda-Bund.' According to the 'Bhai-Bund' system, all lands and possessions were equally distributed among sons, but sometimes, a special share, 'Kharch-i-Sardari', was given to the eldest. But according to 'Choonda-Bund', the whole property was divided among mothers for their respective male issues.

Murray writes, "on failure of brothers and nephews, the general practice is equal division of lands and personal effects amongst the surviving widows of Manjha Sikhs. Adoption by

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1. Steinbach : *The Punjab*, p. 77

widows is not allowed and the female line is entirely excluded from the succession."

Amongst the Malwa Sikhs, the law of primogeniture was generally followed. The eldest son, however, used to give small *jagirs* or grants of land to his younger brothers. But the brothers, nephews and the widows of a deceased chief never held the right to claim a share, although by custom, a small share was generally given to them.

Regarding the law of succession in cases of Hindus and Mohammadans, it was governed by the 'Sharah' and 'Matakhra'. The cases of disputed succession were decided either by referring the matter to the *panchayats* or through 'Kheon-Buha' (i.e. price of blood) or through 'Gaha', i.e. self indemnification.

Regarding the position of women of those days, we find that they were generally engaged at a very early age. Murray writes : "Nuptial contracts are made in early youth by the parents or nearest kin who, in too many cases, are influenced more by pecuniary and sordid motives than by the welfare of the children. Disagreements are very common relating to betrothal (*mangni*) and to breaches of promise of marriage (*nata or rishta*) amongst all classes of the inhabitants. In some instances, real or imaginary diseases or bodily defects will be alleged by one of the contracting parties as a reason why the bargain should be annulled; in others, a flaw of the caste; and in most, a discovery that the girl had been promised to two or three or four different families, from all of which the needy parents or guardians had received money or ornaments or clothes."<sup>1</sup>

Amongst the Jats, there prevailed a strange custom which is thus described by Murray :

Amongst all the Jat families and some others of the lower classes in the Punjab, a custom prevails. On the demise of one brother leaving a widow, the surviving brother takes his sister-in-law to wife. The offspring by this connection are legitimate and entitled to succeed to a share of all the landed and personal property. It is optional with the widow to take either the eldest (*Jeth*), or the youngest who is generally preferred and deemed most

1. Steinbach : *The Punjab*, p. 88

**suitable.** Should she determine to relinquish the worldly ideas and to reside chaste in her father-in-law's house, she may adopt this course, but such instances are rare."

**Sati** *Sati* also existed among certain sections of the society of those days. Sometimes, the several wives of a person, not only the favoured wife but a whole host of them, were offered up to blaze on the pyre in the event of his death. Murray writes: "In most cases of *Sati*, it will generally be observed that a slow, reluctant promise has been extracted from or made by the wretched women in an unguarded moment; and then, under the influence of grief, a multitude is immediately assembled round her dwelling and person; clamour and precipitancy succeed—no time is permitted for reflection. Honour, shame and duty all combine to strengthen her bloody resolution—and the scene is hurried through and closed."<sup>1</sup>

## II

### Economic Condition

**Agriculture** The Punjab was mainly an agricultural country. Its soil was known for its fertility. Steinbach says that in fertility and productivity, the Punjab "is second only to the most favoured districts" of the British India. Regarding the means of irrigation, Murray gives the following information:

"Bunds or dams are always constructed after the rains have ceased to raise the water to a level with the surface, and to render it applicable to the purposes of irrigation...with the view of relieving the deficiencies experienced from the want of the fluid in the arid districts ..a substitute for the dam might be found in a hydraulic wheel of simple construction, to draw the water to the level and in places where the banks are comparatively low, it will only be requisite to dig the root or cut, for reception and carriage of the water deeper and raise it in the cut by sluice boards. The 'charas' or leathern bags are in common use at wells with a relief of bullocks that might also be serviceable in other spots."<sup>2</sup>

Steinbach tells us that the chief products of the cultivated area

1. Steinbach : *The Punjab*, p. 92.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 89

"are wheat and other descriptions of grain, indigo, sugar, rice, opium, cotton, hemp and various sorts of oil-seeds."

**Industries** Industrially, the Lahore State under Ranjit Singh was quite prosperous. The important industries of that time were the manufacture of arms and textiles. The Punjab was also known for the manufacture of shawls and leather goods of high quality. The arms were made at Lahore. Swords, spears, matchlocks, muskets, pistols and armours of standard quality were prepared in the foundries at Lahore. Fine shawls were made in Kashmir and ordinary shawls at Amritsar.

**Kashmir Shawls** The Kashmir shawls enjoyed a very high reputation in Europe and Steinbach gives a brief description of the various stages through which the shawls were fabricated. "The tame goat, the wild goat, the wild sheep, the yak (a small ox) and some of the hill dogs supply the wool required in the manufacture of the shawls. This wool is of two colours, dark-brown and white, the former possessing about half the value of the latter which is better suited for dyeing. After the long hairs have been carefully separated from the mass, the residue undergoes a very careful washing, rice flour forming an efficient substitute for soap. As soon as the whole is perfectly dry, the spinning-wheel comes into play. Women are employed on this part of the business at a very low rate of wages. The yarn is then dyed, not less than sixty different tints being employed by the dyers. The raw material being prepared, the loom and shuttle are now brought into operation; the design of the pattern is drawn by one hand, another selects the proportions and quality of the threads, the warp and woof are arranged by a third person and then the weaving commences. The time occupied in the process depends in a great measure upon the pattern of the shawl; if it be brilliant and variegated; many months are consumed in the weaving of it; if simple, shawl will be prepared in less than three months."<sup>1</sup> The costly shawls, according to Moorcroft, were sold at no less than 700 rupees each and Baron Hugel says that a tolerably fine pair of shawls could be obtained for about 200 rupees. Ranjit Singh considered shawls to be the finest products of his kingdom and whenever he sent presents to the King of England, or the Governor-General, he always included the finest types of

1. Steinbach : *The Punjab*, p. 51



shawls in it.

Besides Lahore and Kashmir, Amritsar, Multan, Shujabad and Leish were the other important manufacturing towns of the Lahore Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

**Trade—Exports and Imports** The Punjab maintained active trade relations with foreign countries. The principal articles of export from the Punjab were grain, wool, silk and cotton fabrics, indigo, shawls and carpets. And the important goods which were imported from British India were spices, silks, ivory, glass, hardware, copper and iron vessels, precious stones, drugs and groceries. The articles of import from the Central Asiatic countries were horses, fruits, Russian clothes and hardware, silk and some coarse cloth. Horse-trade was also a popular occupation of the Sikhs of those days. **Horse-trade** Ranjit Singh's love for horses had almost reached a passion and so he always tried to secure horses of the best breed. The British had come to know of Ranjit Singh's love for horses, and so whenever they sent any gifts or presents to him, they always included horses.

Steinbach tells us that "the trade is carried on with the north-west and south-east by means of camels, mules and donkeys; but from one part of the Punjab to another, the five rivers afford the readiest channels of transport and from the south to the western point of the territory, such as Scinde, Cutch and western India, the boats of the Indus convey the produce and manufactures." And the same writer tells us that "the transit of goods from countries beyond the Indus to Hindustan and vice versa forms a larger source of mercantile revenue than the returns from the home manufactures of the country."

### Books for Further Study

1. Steinbach : *The Punjab*
2. Mohan Lal : *Journey of a Tour through the Punjab and Afghanistan*
3. Osborne : *Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh*

1. Steinbach : *The Punjab*, p. 50

4. **Sohan Lal Suri : *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh***
5. **Moorcroft and Trebeck : *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab***
6. **Burns : *Travels into Bukhara etc.***
7. **Baron Hugel : *Travels in Kashmir and Punjab***

## CHAPTER · XXVI

### THE PUNJAB FROM 1839 TO 1845

#### I

#### 1. Kharak Singh (July 1839 to October 1839)

After the death of Ranjit Singh, his son Kharak Singh succeeded him. Kharak Singh was the son of Rani Raj Kaur and Ranjit Singh. He was born in 1802 and was the eldest son of the Maharaja. He was given a silver chair in the Court. During the reign of the Maharaja, Kharak Singh was given the command of several big expeditions. It was under his command that Multan and Kashmir were conquered.

Ranjit Singh in his lifetime had made provision for his succession to him. Just before his death, he called a meeting of his Sardars and with his own hands placed the *tilak* or the mark of royalty on Kharak Singh's forehead and asked Dhian Singh to act as the guardian and Wazir of Kharak Singh. Dhian Singh was also given the title of '*Naib-Sulnat, Daulat-i-Sadar and Wazir Azam*'. The news of this ceremony was communicated to all the provincial governors.

After Ranjit Singh's death in July 1839, Kharak Singh's succession took place peacefully. But he was not a worthy son of his father. He was very much addicted to opium. He took pleasure in spending his time in useless and luxurious pursuits.

He also believed in the policy of keeping favourites and gave his highest confidence to a relative of his, viz. Chet Singh. Chet Singh advised him to reduce the power of the Dogra Chiefs and particularly that of the Prime Minister, Dhian Singh. Consequently, an order was issued that Dhian Singh and his son Hira Singh should not, in future, have free access to the *Zenana*. Besides, Chet Singh took the title of 'Wazir' also.

Dhian Singh and the other Jammu Rajas could not relish the rise of an upstart like Chet Singh. His domination over Kharak Singh was considered an insult by the Dogra Rajas who decided to make alliance with Kharak Singh's son, Naunihal Singh. They sent a message

to the prince who was at that time at Peshawar, asking him to come to Lahore and join them. The Dogra Rajas also gave out to the people that Kharak Singh and Chet Singh had made secret alliance with the British to whom they had even decided to give six annas in a rupee. They also made it current that the Sikh Army would soon be disbanded. Thus, the Dogra Rajas got a number of followers against Chet Singh and Kharak Singh.

**Murder of Chet Singh and Imprisonment of Kharak Singh** Naunihal Singh and the Dogra Rajas then made a plot to murder Chet Singh. Raja Dhian Singh, accompanied by his brothers Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh, one day went into the fort in the early hours of the morning. In the way, they came across two Bhais and also a 'Gadwai' of Chet Singh and murdered them.

Chet Singh was then searched and put to death. These murders occurred in October 1839. The Dogra brothers were so furious at that time that if Chand Kaur and Naunihal Singh had not stopped them, they would have even murdered Kharak Singh. Kharak Singh felt so much disgusted with this treachery that he left the palace and took up his abode in his *haveli* in the city.

## II

### Naunihal Singh (October 1839 to November 1840)

Naunihal Singh was the grandson of Ranjit Singh and the son of Kharak Singh and his wife, Chand Kaur. He was the ablest among Ranjit Singh's successors. At the time when Ranjit Singh died and Kharak Singh succeeded him, the prince was living at Peshawar. As already mentioned above, Raja Dhian Singh, by telling Naunihal Singh that his father was pro-British, had won him over to his side and, consequently, Naunihal Singh brought about the fall of his own father. After the murder of Chet Singh and the virtual retirement of Kharak Singh, Naunihal Singh took the reins of government in his own hands. He enjoyed, at that time, the implicit confidence of the army and the people. But one serious defect in him was that he was entirely under the influence of Brahmans, 'Bawas' and 'Faqirs'.

Naunihal Singh was the bitterest enemy of the British and it is said that he even started negotiations for a secret alliance with Dost



**His Anti-British  
Feeling**

Muhammad of Kabul to turn the British out of India. The British Agent in the Punjab, Captain

Wade, protested against the anti-British feelings of Naunihal; but the Prince prevailed upon the British authorities at Calcutta to call Wade and in his place appoint someone else. The

**Clark Replaces  
Wade**

new British Agent, Clark, soon developed cordiality with the Maharaja and thus amicable relations were restored. But Naunihal Singh throughout

the period of his ascendancy remained suspicious and distrustful of the British in his heart of hearts.

Naunihal Singh also did not relish the overwhelming power and influence of the Dogra Rajas and so decided to reduce it. But

**Naunihal Turns  
against the Dogra  
Rajas**

he did it tactfully. He sent his army against the Raja of Kangra who had revolted; and then from Kangra quietly moved his troops towards Jammu.

However, Naunihal Singh did not prove to be a worthy son. Not only did he bring about the fall of his father, but he was also

**Not a Worthy  
Son**

in a way responsible for his father's death. When Kharak Singh fell ill, Naunihal Singh did not make good arrangements for his medical treatment.

During his illness, he visited his father only once and it may be said that Kharak Singh died because of Naunihal Singh's indifference.

Naunihal Singh was, nevertheless, punished by Nature. While he was returning from his father's funeral, the archway of Hazuri

**Naunihal's  
Death : Punished  
by Nature**

Gate crashed and he received fatal injuries. On

the same day, i.e. 5th November, he succumbed to his injuries. There is a controversy whether the

death of Naunihal Singh was accidental or due to

any well-planned conspiracy of his enemies. Latif's view is that it was accidental, a retribution of Heaven; but some historians believe that it was pre-designed by the Dogra Chiefs. With the death of Naunihal Singh, however, the Sikhs became bereft of a gallant and promising ruler.

### III

#### Sher Singh

After the death of Naunihal Singh, Raja Dhyan Singh wanted Sher Singh to ascend the throne; but that could not be done with-



out facing some stiff opposition. Rani Chand Kaur, the mother of Naunihal Singh, proclaimed herself regent of the unborn child of her son. She raised the Sindhanwalia Chiefs, Ajit Singh and Attar Singh, to eminent positions, because they supported her. But she was not a woman of strong character. She was also not a capable administratrix, so that the strings of administration began to loosen, giving rise to discontent among the people. Raja Dhian Singh and Sher Singh took advantage of this growing discontent and won over the powerful Khalsa Army by offering them some increase in their salary. In January 1841, Sher Singh, with the secret support of Dhian Singh, declared war against Rani Chand Kaur and attacked Lahore.

For eight days, the Rani held out. In the end, she capitulated on January 17, 1841. The Sindhanwalia Chiefs, Ajit Singh and Attar Singh, fled across the Satluj where they made a vain attempt to persuade Lord Auckland to take up Chand Kaur's cause. After the defeat of the Rani, Sher Singh proclaimed himself the Maharaja of Lahore. He, however, treated Rani Chand Kaur generously. She was given a pension and a separate house in the city. In order to retain her position, she even agreed to marry Sher Singh, but before the marriage could take place she was murdered in June 1842, by her own attendants, probably at the instigation of Raja Gulab Singh.

The first task of Sher Singh was to reward or punish the Sardars, according to their behaviour towards him. Dhian Singh was made the Prime Minister. Most of the Sardars who recognized his authority were liberally rewarded. The Sindhanwalia Chiefs, Ajit Singh and Attar Singh, had left the Lahore kingdom and taken refuge with the British. Their *jagirs* were confiscated. Lehna Singh, another Sindhanwalia chief, was arrested and his *jagir*, too, was taken away.

Sher Singh was an incapable ruler and spent most of his time in useless pursuits. He was a profligate and 'was only too glad to shift the cases of government on to the shoulders of the willing Dhian Singh who took the opportunity to fill all the most important posts in the state service with friends of his family.' The Jammu brothers were

never more powerful than at this juncture.

One of the most notable events of Sher Singh's reign is that he rendered great help to the British in their attempt to reconquer Afghanistan. This help was greatly appreciated by the Governor-General, Lord Ellenborough. But the tragedy was that in spite of all this services, the British formulated secret plans to destroy the independence of the Punjab.

After some time, Sher Singh got tired of Dhian Singh and he wanted to overthrow him. He called Ajit Singh and Attar Singh who had gone to the British and began to treat them with trust and respect. Ajit Singh and Attar Singh, however, had not forgotten their old grudge against Sher Singh and were on the lookout to take revenge. Once they asked Sher Singh to inspect their new horsemen. Consequently, the Maharaja went to Shah Bilawal, where Ajit Singh presented a gun to the Maharaja and in the course of the presentation, shot him dead. Ajit Singh and Attar Singh then made a search for Raja Dhian Singh and killed him the same day.

**Sher Singh Recalled Sindhanwalia Chiefs**

**Assassination of Maharaja Sher Singh and Raja Dhian Singh**

This tragedy is a great blot on the name of the Sindhanwalia Sardars. Hira Singh, son of Dhian Singh, revolted against this mean action of the Sindhanwalia Chiefs and consequently won over the Sikh Army by promising an increase of one rupee in their salaries. He then led an attack against the Sindhanwalia Chiefs. Lehna Singh and Ajit Singh were searched and put to death. Hira Singh, then, raised another son of Ranjit Singh, viz. Daleep Singh, to the throne and himself became the Prime Minister. It is believed that behind the murders committed by the Sindhanwalias there was the lurking hand of the British who aimed at creating chaos in the Punjab.

**Hira Singh's Rise to Power**

#### IV

#### **Maharaja Daleep Singh—Hira Singh, Jawahar Singh and Lal Singh**

Hira Singh held the sway for over fifteen months and took revenge. All the estates of the Sindhanwalia chiefs were confisca-



**Hira Singh**      ted and the only Sindhanwalia Sardar who escaped his terrible wrath was Attar Singh. He had fled and taken refuge with the British once again.

Raja Hira Singh then consolidated his position by adding two rupees and eight annas per mensem to each soldier's salary. He also cleared off their arrears. In this way, for some time, Hira Singh enjoyed the dominating position. But soon, his rising influence roused the jealousy of his rival Sikh Sardars. Jawahar Singh, the maternal uncle of Daleep Singh, did not like that Hira Singh should enjoy such a dominating position. Besides, Hira Singh's own uncle, Suchet Singh, turned against him. Ranjit Singh's other sons, Kashmira Singh and Peshawara Singh, also challenged Hira Singh's authority.

**Jawahar Singh's Opposition Falls**      Jawahar Singh even threatened the Army and its regiments and said that if they would not get rid of Hira Singh, he would take away the boy Maharaja to the British. But the soldiers, because of the recent increase in their salaries, remained loyal to Hira Singh. They arrested Jawahar Singh and thus for the time being, the power continued to remain in the hands of Hira Singh.

**Hira Singh's Favours on Pandit Jalla and His Fall**      But Hira Singh could not enjoy the power for long. Suchet Singh, Kashmira Singh and Peshawara Singh rose in revolt. The Army which was hitherto on the side of Hira Singh began to dislike his attachment for Pandit Jalla, the family priest of the Jammu Rajas. Hira Singh showered great favours on Jalla who was given vast powers. The Sikh soldiers resented this 'Peshawarism' which Hira Singh wanted to establish in the Punjab. When the Army officers came to know that Jalla had even begun to treat the Maharani with disrespect, they decided to do away with Hira Singh and his mentor. Accordingly, they were captured and put to death in December 1844. Another cause of Raja Hira Singh's unpopularity was his expedition against Bhai Vir Singh of Naurangabad, which resulted in the Bhai's death. On account of his piety, the Bhai was regarded as a guru by the Sikhs.

**Jawahar Singh Comes to Power**      After the overthrow of Hira Singh and his favourite Pandit Jalla, the ministerial office was assumed by Jawahar Singh, maternal uncle of Maharaja Daleep Singh. He held the exalted office of Prime Minister for nine months from January 1845 to September 1845. The first thing that Jawahar Singh had to do was to win over the Army. He

raised the salary of the soldiers by half a rupee and thus consolidated his position.

But this rise of Jawahar Singh to power was not liked by the Dogra Raja Gulab Singh, and Raja Lal Singh, the paramour of the queen-mother, Rani Jindan. Gulab Singh, therefore, instigated Peshawara Singh, another son of Ranjit Singh, to revolt, and promised him his support.

Peshawara Singh, consequently, occupied Attock. A large force was sent against him and he was defeated. But Jawahar Singh committed a great mistake. He got Pashawara Singh murdered. The Khalsa Army did not like this action of Jawahar Singh. A meeting of the Army *Panchayats* was called and the case of Jawahar Singh was placed before it. The army summoned Jawahar Singh to appear before it. He took his nephew Daleep Singh with him in the hope that the presence of the Maharaja might influence the troops in his favour. But the Army took away the child and shot Jawahar Singh dead.

After the death of Jawahar Singh, none cherished the office of Prime Minister of the Lahore Kingdom. Even Raja Lal Singh Gulab Singh did not try because he knew that during the last one year, two Prime Ministers had been violently removed by the Army.

Rani Jindan exploited the situation and raised Raja Lal Singh to the office of the Wazir. It was Lal Singh who conducted the First Sikh War, but later on the British charged him with instigating the Kashmir Governor not to hand over Kashmir to Raja Gulab Singh. For this, he was tried, found guilty, dismissed and exiled. After the removal of Lal Singh, Rani Jindan was charged with inciting the Sikhs against the British and, consequently, was exiled first to Sheikhpura, and then to Banaras. This thing created a great stir. Dalhousie and the British Resident at Lahore, Currie, further exploited the situation and so manoeuvred that there should occur a general insurrection of the Sikhs, which might afford them a fair excuse to annex the Punjab. They succeeded in their plans and accordingly, on March 29, 1849, the Punjab was annexed and the boy Maharaja Daleep Singh was asked to relinquish all his claims to the sovereignty of the Punjab.

**Books for Further Study**

1. Evans Bell : *Annexation of the Punjab*
2. Sarkar and Dutt : *A Textbook of Modern Indian History*
3. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
4. Cunningham : *History of the Sikhs*
5. Payne : *A Short of History the Sikhs*

## CHAPTER XXVII

### ANGLO-SIKH WARS

#### I

#### Causes of the First Sikh War

The British since long had set their covetous eyes on the territory of the Punjab. Even in the days of Ranjit Singh, their aggressive designs on the Punjab were quite apparent.

(i)  
**British Policy of Encirclement of the Punjab** They had been cautiously following the policy of gradual encirclement of the Punjab and were anxious to make the Maharaja feel that they could not remain completely disinterested in his affairs and schemes. In 1836, they successfully checked the Maharaja's ambitious scheme of expansion by asking him to withdraw his forces from Sindh. They had already occupied Ferozepur in 1835 and turned it into a military cantonment in 1838. In Sindh, again the British had forestalled the Maharaja by pressing the Amirs to admit a British Resident at Hyderabad in 1838. Even the question of the annexation of the Panjab had been discussed in 1837 and Osborne had written in May 1838 : "One course to pursue on Ranjit Singh's death is the instant occupation of the Punjab by an overwhelming force and the establishment of our north-western frontier on the Indus. The East India Company has swallowed too many camels to strain at this gnat". At the time of the Tripartite Treaty, 1838, when Ranjit Singh showed signs of hesitation, he was plainly told that "he would be left out, if he did not choose to be a party to the treaty." Ranjit Singh himself realized that "his own kingdom in such a provocative proximity would ere long be absorbed within the British empire" and he is said to have uttered the words "Sab lal ho jayega" i. e. the whole of India, including the Punjab, would go red i.e. pass on to the British.

(ii)  
**Anarchy in the Punjab after the Death of Ranjit Singh** The death of Ranjit Singh provided a good opportunity to the British. The Punjab became engulfed in a civil war and anarchy prevailed everywhere. Consequently, military *Panchayats* came into existence and the Army rule was established in the Punjab.



**(iii) British Designs and Military Preparations** The British thought of taking advantage of this anarchy and started military preparations. They began to prepare boats at Bombay which could be used for making pontoon bridges across the Satluj. They were already advancing bodies of troops towards the Satluj, contrary to the treaty of 1809 and were gradually re-inforcing their various garrisons in the north-west of the province. They considerably strengthened their military establishments on the Satluj forntier where the number of their soldiers rose from 2500 men in 1836 to 14,000 in 1843, and, similarly, they augmented their military stores considerably. Moreover, after the disaster of the First Afghan War, the British wanted to make some new conquest in order to restore their fallen military prestige. The conquest of the Punjab would be all the more easier for them because their troops and convoys had passed through the Punjab during the First Afghan War and had, consequently, become conversant with the geography of that territory.

**(iv) Feeling of Sikhs after the Afghan War and the Annexation of Sind** The Sikhs naturally regarded those military preparations and the political designs of the British with great alarm. Moreover, the British failure in the First Afghan War had exploded the myth of the invincibility of the British soldiers, and the Sikh solidiers now felt more confident in coming to grips with the British. The annexation of Sind by the British had also created alarm among the Punjabis who thought that the next British target would be the Punjab, as Sind could not be controlled effectively unless the Punjab was also in the hands of the British.

**(v) Broadfoot in Place of Richmond** It was at that time when the Sikhs were considering "the fixed policy of the English to territorial aggrandizement and the immediate object of their ambition to be the conquest of Lahore"<sup>1</sup> that Mr. Richmond was replaced by Major Broadfoot as the British Agent at Ludhiana. Major Broadfoot was a hot-headed man and one of his first acts was to declare the cis-Satluj possessions of Lahore to be under the British protection. His policy soon irritated the Sikhs and the Sikh Army; and they, therefore, felt convinced that war with the British was inevitable.

1. A. C. Bannerjee : *Anglo Sikh Relations*, p. 14

It is widely believed that Rani Jindan wanted to take advantage of that feeling, because she was greatly afraid of the Sikh Army and wanted to keep it employed against the British. Therefore the Army was further roused by the Rani and her confidants. All these things had raised the temper of the Khalsa Army and in the words of Cunningham "when the men were tauntingly asked whether they would quietly look on while the limits of the Khalsa dominion were being reduced, and the plains of Lahore occupied by the remote strangers of Europe, they answered that they would defend with their lives all belonging to the Commonwealth of Govind, and that they would march and give battle to the invaders on their own ground".

(vi)  
Responsibility of  
Rani Jindan

Consequently, the Sikh troops began to move in detachments from Lahore. They commenced crossing the Satluj between Harike and Kasur on the 11th December and on the 14th of that month, a portion of the Sikhs took a position within a few miles of Ferozepur. The initiative was thus taken by the Sikhs and the British Governor-General, Hardinge, issued the declaration of War on the 13th December, 1845 and also proclaimed "the possession of Maharaja Dalip Singh on the left or the British bank of Satluj confiscated and annexed to the British territories."

(vii)  
Sikhs Cross the  
Satluj

## II

### Main Events of the First Sikh War

The Lahore Army of invasion, according to A.C. Bannerjee, may have equalled thirty-five or forty thousand men, with a hundred and fifty pieces of artillery. It was headed by the Sikh General Lal Singh. On the other side, the Ambala and the Ludhiana divisions of the British Army under Sir Hughe Gough totalling about 11,000 men arrived at Mudki, twenty miles from Ferozepur, on December 18 and had scarcely taken up their ground when they were attacked by a detachment of the Sikh Army. The engagement was bloody and sharp. Lal Singh headed the attack, but treacherously left the field at a critical moment "leaving the Sikhs to fight as their undirected valour might prompt." The Sikhs were repulsed with a loss of seventeen guns. The British casualties were 215 killed and 657

Battles of the  
Satluj—  
Mudki and  
Ferozeshah

wounded.<sup>1</sup> On the 21st December, the British forces effected a junction with Sir John Littler's division and marched against the Sikh entrenchments of Ferozshah, about twelve miles from the Satluj. At the beginning of the contest on 21st December, the Sikhs fought stubbornly and with terrific force and the British Army was in a critical and perilous state, but the treachery of the Sikh generals ultimately helped the English cause and the Sikh entrenchments were finally captured on 22nd December.

But for the failure of the Sikh leadership, the result of this battle of Ferozeshah might have been otherwise. The battle was thus won by the British, but the success was gained by them after very heavy losses. So huge were the losses of the British that they said 'Another such victory and we are undone.' Their losses were 694 killed and 1721 wounded. The Sikhs suffered even more. Their casualties were estimated at 8,000 killed and the loss of 73 pieces of artillery. The victors, according to Cunningham, were paralysed after their prodigious exertions and intense excitement"<sup>2</sup> and remained inactive for some time. But before they could recoup or get any re-inforcement, a strong body of Sikhs under Ranjodh Singh Majithia, again crossed the Satluj in January and made a dash on the frontier station of Ludhiana.

**Buddowal** The English suffered a defeat in a skirmish with the Sikhs at Buddowal on January 21, but after being reinforced, the British inflicted a crushing defeat on the Sikhs, in **Aliwal** spite of their strong resistance at Aliwal on January 28, 1846. The Sikhs fled across the Satluj and many of them were drowned in the river.

The last battle of the war was fought on February 10, 1846, at Sabraon where the Sikhs had constructed strong entrenchments.

**Sabraon** "Sabraon", according to Mr. Wheeler, "proved to be the hardest-fought battle in the history of British India. The Sikh soldiers, unlike their treacherous commander, Tej Singh, were prepared to conquer or die for the glory of the Khalsa"<sup>3</sup>. But while the soldiers did everything, the Sikh commanders, with the honourable exception of Sham Singh Atariwala, remained inactive or proved traitors. Cunningham has

1. A. C. Bannerjee : *Anglo Sikh Relation*, p. 125

2. A.C. Bannerjee : *Anglo Sikh Relations*, p. 127

3. Quoted in Roberts : *History of British India*, p. 597

rightly observed, "Hearts to dare and hands to execute were numerous, but there was no mind to guide and animate the whole<sup>1</sup>. Hence the Sikh entrenchments were starved and their casualties numbered about eight to ten thousand men. The English losses were 320 killed and 2083 wounded. Sham Singh Atariwala met a heroic death in the campaign.

The victory at Sabraon was decisive; it saved the British power in India from humiliation in a critical struggle with 'the bravest and steadiest enemy encountered in India by a British army.'<sup>1</sup> On the 13th February, 1846, the whole of the British Army crossed the Satluj and on the 20th, occupied Lahore.

End of the War :  
Occupation  
Lahore

### III

#### Treaties of Lahore and Bhyrowal

A treaty was concluded between the Sikhs and the British on 9th March, 1846, the terms of which were dictated by the English to the vanquished Sikhs in the capital of Ranjit Singh. By the terms of this Treaty of Lahore :

(a) The Maharaja renounced 'for himself, his heirs and successors all claims to, or connection with, the territories lying to the south of the River Satluj.

(b) He ceded to the Company 'in perpetual sovereignty all his forts, territories and rights in the Doab or country, hill and plain, situated between the Rivers Beas and Satluj.'

(c) The Lahore Durbar, being unable to pay the indemnity of one and a half crores of rupees demanded by the English, the Maharaja transferred to the Company 'in perpetual sovereignty, as equivalent for one crore of rupees, all his forts, territories, rights and interests in the hill countries, which are situated between the the Rivers Beas and Indus, including the provinces of Cashmere (Kashmir) and Hazarah.' The Sikhs were to pay the remaining fifty lacs on or before the ratification of this treaty.

(d) The Maharaja further agreed to 'disband the mutinous troops of the Lahore Army, taking from them their arms.' Besides the regular army of the Lahore State was, henceforth, limited to 25

1. A.C. Bannerjee : *Anglo Sikh Relation*, p. 138

2. Smith : *Oxford History of India*, p. 695



battalions of infantry and 12,000 cavalry. All guns used by the Sikhs at Sabraon were to be surrendered to the English.

(e) Free passage was to be allowed to the British troops through the Lahore territories ; and the Maharaja engaged 'never to take or retain in his service any British subject, nor the subject of any European or American State, without the consent of the British government'

(f) The minor Daleep Singh was recognized as the Maharaja with Rani Jindan as Regent of the State and Lal Singh as Prime Minister.

(g) The Governor-General undertook not to 'exercise any interference in the internal administration of the Lahore State'; but a British force 'adequate for the purpose of protecting the person' of the Maharaja was left at Lahore which was to be withdrawn after the close of the year 1846 and Sir Henry Lawrence was appointed the British Resident.

Kashmir and the other hill States from the Beas to the Indus were given, under a separate treaty, to Gulab Singh, the Dogra Raja, serving in the Lahore Durbar in return for one million sterling. But in the month of October 1846, Lal Singh's Conspiracy and His Banishment Sheikh Imamud-Din, the Punjab Governor of Kashmir, rose in revolt against Gulab Singh at the instigation of Wazir Lal Singh. This revolt was put down by a considerable British force. Lal Singh was tried by a formal court of inquiry and his guilt being proved, he was dismissed from the ministership and was deported to Dehradun.

Some of the Sikh Sardars, however, thought<sup>1</sup> that after the departure of the British troops from the Punjab, again anarchy would set in and hence they asked for a revision of the treaty. So, a new treaty was signed on 22nd December, 1846, which is known as the Second Lahore Treaty or the Bhyrowal Treaty and which included the Article of Agreement concluded between the British and the Lahore Durbar on December 16, 1846. This treaty made the British the real masters of the Punjab. During the minority of Daleep Singh, its administration was to be carried on by a Council of Regency

<sup>1</sup> It has now been established that all this was a sinister drama enacted secretly by the British to serve their selfish ends.

of eight Sikh Sardars, acting under the control and guidance of the British Resident. The Lahore Government was to pay to the British twenty-two lacs of rupees for the maintenance of a British force. Henry Lawrence was appointed the British Resident at Lahore.

#### IV

### Second Sikh War

#### (a) Causes

The Sikhs, after the first Anglo-Sikh War, were far from feeling themselves subdued, though their Army had been defeated.

(i) **Sikhs Impatient of British Ascendancy in the Punjab** They attributed their defeat in the war to the treachery of their leaders, Tej Singh and Lal Singh, and not to any inherent weakness in them. Hence there was a natural desire among the Sikhs to recover their independence once more.

(ii) **British Interference in the Social Customs of the Punjab** This desire became all the more stronger because of the interference of the British in their social customs, as Henry Lawrence, the Resident, tried to introduce a number of social reforms in the Punjab.

The removal of Rani Jindan from Lahore to Sheikhpura by the British further added to the bitterness of the Sikhs. This discontent against the British high-handedness in the Punjab had become so great that only a suitable opportunity was needed for a gigantic outburst. In fact, a second war was being forced on the Sikhs.

(iii) **Internment of Rani Jindan** The event which led to the Sikh war is the revolt of Dewan Mulraj of Multan. In March 1848, it was decided to relieve Mulraj of his governorship of Multan and, consequently, Sardar Kahan Singh Man was sent to Multan with 500 State troops and two British officers, Vans Agnew and Lieutenant Anderson, to take over the charge. These British officers were, however, murdered in Multan, probably at the instigation of Mulraj who declared a war against the British on April 20, 1848. With this revolt of Mulraj, the Second Sikh War, however did not begin. The Sikh Army and the Sikh Sardars did not join this petty revolt which, in the view of Edwardes, could



then have been easily crushed. But the plan of Lord Dalhousie and the British Resident, Sir Frederick Currie, was that this revolt should take the shape of a general insurrection and, consequently, throw a powerful conquering army into the Punjab and annex it. Hence they delayed British activities from April to September 1848.

The British, thus, wanted that this Multan revolt should take the shape of a general Sikh insurrection and they succeeded in it.

(v)  
**Forced Chattar Singh to Rise against the British** Early in August, Chattar Singh, the Sikh Governor of Hazara, mainly through the intrigues of Captain Abbot, was forced to rise in revolt and on the 14th of September, 1848, his son Sher Singh also went over to the side of Mulraj with all his troops.

(vi)  
**Banishment of Rani Jindan** Meanwhile, the British had charged Rani Jindan with a conspiracy and, consequently, she had been banished from Sheikhpura to Banaras. This further created great resentment among a major portion of the Sikh troops who also threw in their lot with Chattar Singh and Sher Singh. They even purchased the friendship and help of their old enemies, the Afghans, by promising them the surrender of Peshawar.

Lord Dalhousie now finally made up his mind to carry through his pre-determined plan and in a letter to the Secret Committee, dated October 7, 1848, he "spoke of a general Punjab War and the occupation of the country." On 10th October, 1848, he declared "Unwarned by precedents, uninfluenced by example, the Sikh nation has called for war and on my word, Sirs, they shall have it with a vengeance."

**General Sikh Insurrection and Dalhousie's Declaration of War**

### (b) Main Events of the Second War

On the 16th of November, Lord Gough crossed the Ravi and on the 22nd, he fought an indecisive battle with Sher Singh at Ramnagar on the Chenab. The Sikhs then entrenched themselves strongly at Chilianwala where a bloody but indecisive battle was fought on January 13, 1849. The English suffered heavy losses with 602 men killed and 1652 wounded. They were, however, more successful at Multan which they captured on January 22.

**Ramnagar and Chilianwala**



The disaster at Chilianwala led to the decision that Lord Gough should be replaced by Sir Charles Napier as Commander-in-Chief. But before that decision could be implemented, the final and decisive battle was fought at Gujrat. The Sikhs, in the meantime, moved to Gurjat where they were joined by Akram Khan, son of Dost Muhammad, with an Afghan force. 'For the first time', wrote Dalhousie, "Sikhs and Afghans were banded together against the British power." The two armies again met in a battle near Gujrat on February 21. It was essentially an artillery action, and is known as "the battle of the guns." After three hours' sustained cannonade, the Sikhs were compelled to leave their positions and were put to flight. This victory at Gujrat proved decisive ; and the English losses were only 69 killed and 670 wounded. The Governor-General called this victory as 'one of the most memorable in the annals of British warfare in India'. On the 13th March, the Sikh Sardars laid down their arms and the Afghans were driven by Sir Gilbert towards the Khyber Pass. Mulraj was tried by a Military Court and sentenced to life-long imprisonment. On March 29, 1849, the Punjab was annexed.

#### **Books for further study**

1. Gough : *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*
2. Malleson : *Decisive battles of Indian History*
3. Sinha : *Ranjit Singh*
4. Cunningham : *History of the Sikhs*
5. A. C. Bannerjee : *Anglo-Sikh Relations*
6. Latif : *History of the Punjab*
7. Sarkar and Datta : *A Textbook of Modern Indian History*
8. Roberts : *History of British India*
9. Smith : *Oxford History of India*
10. E. Bell : *Annexation of the Punjab*

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### ANNEXATION OF THE PUNJAB

#### I

#### Annexation

After the decisive victory of Gujrat, two courses were open to Dalhousie to settle the fate of the Punjab. The first was to retain the Maharaja and tighten the British Control over the Punjab, and the other was to adopt the extreme action of annexation. Dalhousie adopted the latter course. But while doing so, he came into conflict with Sir Henry Lawrence who was then recently appointed Resident at Lahore in place of Sir Frederick Currie. Henry could not see eye to eye with Dalhousie with regard to his Punjab policy. While Dalhousie was bent upon annexing the Punjab, Lawrence believed that the British by their mistakes and provocations had roused the Sikhs and so the responsibility of the rising rested on the British. He, therefore, argued that the vanquished deserved every consideration at the hands of the British. He refused to believe that "Gujrat had destroyed all title deeds and had given the British a clean slate whereon they could inscribe their sovereign will."

On the 18th January, before the Punjab campaign was terminated, the Governor-General invited Lawrence to draft a proclamation in anticipation of the final destruction of the Sikh Army. Accordingly, Lawrence prepared a proclamation conciliatory in tone and intended to be an "*olive branch*" held out to the Sikhs.

Dalhousie dubbed this proclamation as objectionable "both in matter and manner"; in matter, because it held out hopes of leniency to the Sikhs and in "manner", because it implied that Lawrence himself was a peacemaker for them. Dalhousie wrote to Lawrence, "I don't seek for a moment to conceal from you that I have seen no reason whatsoever to depart from the opinion that peace and the vital interests of the Punjab require that the power of the Sikh government should not only be defeated but subverted and their dynasty abolished". But Lawrence was not shaken in his conviction and he wrote back: "My own opinion, as already more than once expressed in the writing to your Lordship, is

against annexation. I did think it unjust. I now think it impolitic". Dalhousie did not pause to convince the honest Lawrence of the expediency and justice of his measure.

Meanwhile, the battle of Gujrat had crushed the military power of the Khalsa. Dalhousie could not afford to wait any longer. There was now the question of time and the mode of annexation. The Governor-General desired to have an interview with Sir Henry Lawrence. The latter avoiding an open conflict with Dalhousie sent his younger brother John to discuss the matter with him. When John's counsel was sought whether the annexation determined upon should be carried out immediately when the people were demoralized by recent defeats or later on when they were more perfectly subdued, he replied without hesitation, "No delay! The Khalsa must not be allowed again to raise its head". Dalhousie who had already made up his mind, *jumped* at the advice of John and decided to annex the Punjab then and there.

On the 28th March, the Governor-General's Secretary, Sir Henry Elliot, arrived in Lahore commissioned with the authority and instructions to carry out the annexation. He, along with the Resident, Sir Henry Lawrence, was given full powers. Henry and John Lawrence, however, were of the view that the Council of Regency would not accept the British terms. But Elliot was sure that he would eventually bring round the Sardars to agree to the British proposals.

Consequently, two influential Sardars of the Council, Raja Dina Nath and Raja Tej Singh, were sent for. They were informed that the Punjab was going to be annexed to the British dominions at all events and that they should sign the terms drafted by the British. The Sardars were given no option to modify those terms. Raja Dina Nath commented upon the severity of the terms, especially regarding the treatment of the Maharaja and the disposal of the *jagirs*. But Elliot took a firm stand and insisted that they should sign the necessary documents and papers. Finding that the British had already made up their mind to annex the Punjab, the Sardars signed the papers. Nur-ud-din and Bhai Nidhan Singh, two other members of the Council were also summoned and they too put their signatures on those documents.

The next day, *i.e.* on the 29th March, at seven o'clock in the morning, Elliot arranged a public Durbar in the Hall of Public

**Audience in the Lahore Fort in order to promulgate the Articles subscribed to, and to obtain the Maharaja's ratification. A Note Declaratory of the intentions of the British Government to assume the sovereignty of the Punjab was read out in Persian and afterwards translated into Hindustani.**

On the conclusion of the reading of that note, there was pin-drop silence. The ice was broken by Diwan Dina Nath when he made an earnest appeal to the British clemency. Elliot sharply retorted that the days of "clemency and concessions" had gone. Then, the conditions, which had been agreed to by some of the members of the Council the day before, were read out in Persian and Hindustani. Thereafter, the signatures of the remaining members of the Council of Regency were added. The papers were then passed on to the Maharaja who affixed his signature.

When the documents were fully ratified, a proclamation of annexation was read out in the native language. In the proclamation, the British traced their amicable relations with Maharaja Ranjit Singh and then charged his successors with having waged war without any provocation. It then dwelt upon the "forbearance and moderation" shown by Lord Hardinge and the scrupulous fidelity with which he discharged the obligations contracted at Lahore and Bhairawal, which the Sikhs on their part had faithlessly and flagrantly violated. The Governor-General regretted that he was compelled to declare the annexation of the Punjab. It also reiterated that the Government of India had no desire for conquest but it was bound by its duty to provide for the security of its people; "therefore the Governor-General of India had declared and hereby proclaims that the kingdom of the Punjab is at an end and all the territories are now and henceforth a portion of the British Empire. The Governor-General then assured that the Maharaja would be treated with consideration and honour and the chiefs who had not engaged in hostilities would be allowed to enjoy their privileged positions. The proclamation in the end called upon the people of the Punjab to submit to the British authority.

The Instrument by which the Punjab was declared annexed, was a "treaty" concluded between the Maharaja's Government and the Hon'ble East India Company on the 29th March, 1849, and ratified by the Governor-General of India on the 5th April, 1849. It consisted of five Articles :

(1) The Maharaja was to renounce for himself and his heirs



and successors all rights, title and claims to the sovereignty of the Punjab.

- (2) The property of the State of whatever description and wheresoever found was to be confiscated to the Hon'ble East India Company.
- (3) The Kohi-i-Noor was to be surrendered to the Queen of England.
- (4) The Maharaja was to be treated with consideration and honour.
- (5) The Maharaja was to receive a pension of not less than four lakhs and not exceeding five lakhs of rupees per annum.

Thus, the Punjab which had been for centuries the lure of a succession of invading hordes and a prey to anarchy passed like its famed "Mountain of Light" into the possession of Queen Victoria.

Lord Dalhousie's action was not approved unanimously by the superior authorities. Even one of his own Councillors, Sir George Clark, expressed strong disagreement with his policy of annexation.

The Directors too did not approve of Dalhousie's action ungrudgingly and unanimously. The despatch registering the approval of the annexation was signed by thirteen members, whereas seven members recorded their dissent.

## II

### A Critical Study of Dalhousie's Policy of Annexation

Some of the admirers and apologists of Lord Dalhousie, such as Duke of Argyll and Marshman, depending entirely upon the Blue Books and greatly influenced by Dalhousie's force of arguments, defend the annexation of the Punjab. They hold that the annexation was forced on him by the sheer force of circumstances. The reasons which his supporters put forth in favour of annexation are discussed below :

Argyll and Marsh-  
man Defend Dal-  
housie's Policy



In the first place, they say that the Sikhs had flagrantly violated the obligations to which they had subscribed in the Treaties of Lahore and the subsequent Articles of Agreement concluded at Bhairawal. They had bound themselves to submit to the full authority of the British Resident directing and controlling all matters in every Department of the State. But the Sikhs grossly violated all those promises. The Sikhs, according to Lord Dalhousie, "had broken the peace and made war on the British". They murdered the British officers in Multan and defied the orders of the British Resident. "The whole Sikh population—the Army and the people alike—"rose in arms deliberately" and made war on the British. A regular conspiracy to tamper with the soldiery was detected. In the conspiracy, some Sikh officers were involved and even the complicity of the Maharani was "distinctly shown". The grandees of the Khalsa Commonwealth incited the Sikhs and declared war against the British. Sardar Chattar Singh and Raja Sher Singh were at the head of the Sikh Army which had determined to exterminate the British from the Punjab. These Sardars, thus, in spite of the solemn treaties, had plunged themselves into rebellion against the British. The Sardars, according to Dalhousie, had, instead of restraining the Sikh soldiery, encouraged them to take up arms against the British, and so naturally Dalhousie was left with no option except for the liquidation of the Sikh State.

Lord Dalhousie had the conviction that the rising was not directed against the Maharaja or Maharaja's Government. The Sikh forces and the Sikh Sardars had risen in arms and fought a ferocious war "for the proclaimed purposes of destroying the British power and exterminating the British race. They repeatedly declared their fidelity to the Maharaja. In the letters written to the soldiers and neighbouring chiefs to rouse them against the British it was stated that 'Raja Sher Singh and others with their valiant troops had joined the valiant and trusty Mool Raj on the part of Maharaja Duleep Singh with a view to eradicating and expelling all the tyrannous and crafty "Frangees". This clearly impressed upon Dalhousie that the Sikh rebellion was against the British and not the Sikh State. Lady Login quotes a letter of Major Edwardes (from the

unpublished correspondence of Sir Frederick Currie) asking the Resident to look well to the person of the Maharaja, for, as he learnt, the Sikhs were thinking of carrying off the Maharaja and then asking the British to account for fighting against Duleep Singh with whom they had made a treaty. The Sikhs, Dalhousie held, wanted to release the Maharaja from the tutelage of the British. Dalhousie, therefore, was forced to take firm action against the Sikhs.

(3)  
Trotter Considers  
Dalhousie's  
Action Unprinci-  
pled and Unjusti-  
fiable

Trotter, however, says that Dalhousie's policy was "unprincipled and unjustifiable." Diwan Mulraj had revolted in April 1848. The British then could have easily crushed the revolt. But Dalhousie deliberately did not take speedy measures. He delayed action with the clear-cut plan 'to arouse a high-spirited people to take up arms' against the British and thus furnish him with a fair excuse for annexing the whole dominion. Maharani Jindan was exiled from Sheikhpura to Banaras for a similar reason. Chattar Singh, the Nazim (Governor) of Hazara, was also provoked by the aggressive and over-bearing attitude of Abbot. In fact, Abbot was responsible for the crimes of Chattar Singh which were later on made an excuse for the British decision to annex the Punjab. Thus, the dilatory plan to crush the Multan revolt was most unprincipled, a dirty plan 'deliberately adopted by the Resident and the Governor-General, contrary to the advice of the Council of Regency,

Dalhousie's  
Defence

Dalhousie, however, refutes the charge that by delaying operations against Multan, he had deliberately given a provocation to the Sikhs. He held that the delay was inevitable. Dalhousie knew that a strong and energetic action could suppress the rebellion at Multan, but the trouble was that it was not feasible. He speaks in that strain in a letter to Hobhouse: "I am well aware that all this risk might have been saved if the Government had only acted with promptitude and energy. This is perfectly true; this is what ought to have been done; but this could not be done". There were numerous difficulties in the way of instantaneous action. The fierce heat and the unhealthy season being a prelude to monsoons precluded all possibilities of a prompt action. The transport difficulties and the uncertainty of the extent of



crisis made the matters worse. Besides, the fort was of a formidable character. The Sikh Sardars had declared their army undependable, and the Resident could not weaken the garrisons at Lahore without endangering his position at the capital. In these circumstances, the operations against Multan were bound to be delayed. If a prompt action had been taken, Dalhousie held, the British would have found themselves in an embarrassing situation. Also, as revealed by this delay, there was a wide-spread and deep feeling of hostility against the British and it would have been worse if the sore of Sikh disaffection might have remained open till the Mutiny (1857). So, according to Dalhousie, the delay in suppressing the Multan outbreak was due to inherent difficulties of the 'situation' and not with a view to provoking the Sikhs.

But this defence of Dalhousie looks hollow when one studies the contemporaneous historical literature closely. The perusal of Dalhousie's letters to the British Resident, Currie, reveals a different story. Dalhousie in one of his letters<sup>1</sup> writes to him, "Sikh population everywhere have brought matters to a crisis 'I have for months been looking for'." The significant words 'I have for months been looking for' establish beyond doubt that the Governor-General was for long manoeuvring to convert the Multan rebellion into a general Sikh rising.

Major Edwardes who was also acquainted with the events says that 'with respect to the Sik Sardars, I believe them to be heart and soul on our side'. At another place he says: "It was my own belief at that time that had the Multan rebellion been put down at once, the Sikh Insurrection would never have grown out of it ...I for once still think so."

In his letters to Currie, Major Edwardes<sup>2</sup> condemns Dalhousie's secret designs in not suppressing the Multan revolt immediately in a high moral strain in the following words:

"The world would acquit us, being ignorant of what we know, but neither God nor our conscience can do so."

1. Private letter of Dalhousie to Currie, dated 8th October, 1848

2. Edwardes : *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*, p. 147

Moreover, it must be remembered that a man like Sir Henry Lawrence, who after Sir Frederick Currie, was the Resident at Lahore, was strongly opposed to the annexation policy of Dalhousie, but unfortunately he failed to convince his master who was out to commit the *Burglary of the Punjab*.

The annexation of the Punjab cannot be justified on the ground of political expediency and necessity. It is usually urged that the annexation was necessary to safeguard the interests and security of British India. But Major Evans Bell says that the annexation of the Punjab was neither unavoidable nor expedient. There was no danger to the tranquility of British India; and the Sikh State was no longer powerful enough to threaten the British territory. Only the Khalsa Army and not the Khalsa State had risen against the 'constituted authority.' The battle of Gujrat had finally crushed the might of the Khalsa Army. So there was no danger from the Army. As for the State of Lahore, it was so crippled and weakened after 1846, that even if the British guardianship were withdrawn, it could not but be virtually a British protectorate. The Treaty of Lahore had reduced it to such a position that it afforded no reasonable ground of apprehension of the tranquility of India.

The very fact that after 1849, the Punjab was easily pacified, shows that whatever hostility was there amongst the Sikhs was crushed after the victory of Gujrat. So there is little force in Dalhousie's argument that the "Sikhs must of necessity detest the British as their conquerors." The Sikhs could have been easily won over by returning the Punjab to them after the minority of the Maharaja was over.

Major Evans Bell who has studied the question of the annexation of the Punjab in detail says that Dalhousie's annexation of the Punjab was 'a violent breach of trust'. Explaining it, he says, "he violated treaties; abused a sacred trust, threw away the grandest opportunity ever offered to the British Government of planting solid and vital reform up to the northern limits of India; and by an acquisition as unjust as it was imprudent, weakened our frontier, scattered our military

**Bell's View—  
A violent Breach  
of Trust**

strength and entailed a heavy financial burden upon the Empire."

He continues :

"That I believe will be the verdict of posterity and history upon the transactions which have just passed under our review." Thus, the Maharaja was simply the ward of the British Government. During the minority of the Maharaja, the real power rested with the guardian, the British Resident at Lahore, Sir Frederick Currie. If Diwan Mulraj revolted, or later, Chattar Singh and Sher Singh revolted, it was the duty of the guardian or Resident to take speedy action, or after the revolt to punish those Sardars who had raised the standard of revolt. It must be fully remembered that in the Second Sikh War, only one out of the eight Sardars who constituted the Council of Regency, had joined the rebels, and Maharaja Daleep Singh, a minor, had absolutely no hand, direct or indirect, in the rebellion. "It was" as the Duke of Argyll says "the Khalsa army and not the Lahore Government (Maharaja or the Council of Regency) which began the Sikh War" and, therefore after the war, if any punishment was to be given, it should have been given to the rebellious Khalsa Army and not to the innocent Maharaja.

Besides, as the Maharaja was the ward of the British Government which was armed with supreme power, he could not be held responsible for not keeping the Khalsa Army under his control. If any person could be held responsible for exercising effective control over the army or the rebels, it was the guardian, i.e. the British Resident, and not the boy Maharaja. So when Dalhousie deprived the Maharaja of his sovereignty of the Punjab, it was a violation of the Treaty of Bhairawal. Considered from whatever point of view—political expediency, or moral justice—the annexation of the Punjab stands condemned for all time to come. It should be better called the "*Burglary of the Punjab*" because it was no less than that.

#### **Books For Further Study**

1. E. Bell : *Annexation of the Punjab*
2. Trotter : *History of India from 1844 to 1862*
3. Edwardes : *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*
4. Sir Charles Gough : *The Sikhs and the Sikh War*
5. Khilnani : *Punjab under the Lawrences*

## CHAPTER XXIX

### I

#### **Administration of the Punjab : 1848-58**

#### **The Punjab under the Board of Administration : 1849-1853**

Immediately after the annexation of the Punjab, Dalhousie's chief concern was to consolidate the British hold in the newly conquered territory which was nearly ninety thousand square miles and to reconcile the valiant Sikhs to the British rule. He wanted to entrust this task of administration to Henry Lawrence, the Resident of Lahore; but before he could do so, he got his resignation because of his differences with him (the Governor-General) on the policy of annexation.

But Dalhousie was a shrewd statesman, He would not, therefore, lose a person who, because of his differences with him, had won the confidence of the Sikhs. Rather on account of this, he found in Henry Lawrence a person eminently qualified to heal the wounds of the Sikhs caused by the war. Henry possessed a special knack of soothing the animosities of the vanquished people; besides, he was held in high esteem by the Sikhs. Dalhousie, therefore, sent his foreign Secretary Elliot to persuade him to withdraw his resignation. Elliot approached him psychologically. He asked Henry Lawrence whether it was fair on his part "to leave in the lurch the people whom he had known so well and for whose independence he had worked so zealously at a time when they were helpless." This touched the softest corner of Henry's heart and so he withdrew his resignation.

After, thus, reconciling Henry, Dalhousie established a 'Board of Administration' for the Punjab. It consisted of three members — Henry Lawrence, John Lawrence and Charles Mansel who was later on succeeded by Robert Montgomery. Henry Lawrence was appointed President of the Board. Since Dalhousie did not have full confidence in Henry, he created the Board. John Lawrence, his brother who was associated in the Board was a man who was a strong supporter of the Dalhousie's policy and so he

**Dalhousie Persuades Henry Lawrence to Assist Him in the New Administrative Set-up of the Punjab**

**The Triumvirate Henry Lawrence, John Lawrence and Charles Mansel (1849-53)**



was meant to provide a check on the pro-Sikh policy of Henry. Charles Mansel had greatly distinguished himself in matters of revenue settlement in the North-Western Province and the Jullundar Doab and was appointed with the intention to secure the necessary harmony between the two brothers who held divergent views on the political issues of the Punjab.

Among the officers selected to serve under this 'Triumvirate' were Herbert Edwardes, John Nicholson, Abbot and Reynell Taylor. William Kaye, writing of these arrangements for the government of the Punjab, says: "Seldom has a brighter galaxy of talents graced any provincial administration."

The Board enjoyed wide powers and unrestricted control over all matters. The members wielded triple powers—executive, magisterial and judicial—even to the extent of awarding death punishment. The new administration was not encumbered with any regulations which might be too intricate for the common people of the Punjab. This is why the system introduced here by the British has been called Non-Regulation.

Henry Lawrence took charge of the military and political affairs. His brother John Lawrence was asked to grapple with the intricacies of finance and land-settlement, and Mansel was required to look after legal and judicial matters. The three members, besides working in their respective spheres, were jointly responsible for the formation and execution of the policies. Thus, Dalhousie's new system in the Punjab was "of divided labour and common responsibility". The actual procedure followed was that all official papers were circulated to all the three members, and each recorded his opinion on every question and when they met in a Board they took decisions collectively.

The task of the Board was not easy. First, Henry Lawrence and John Lawrence differed radically in their temperament and outlook. Secondly, Sir Charles Napier, the new Commander-in-Chief, wanted to establish a military rule in the Punjab, whereas Henry, backed by Dalhousie, wanted to set up a civil government. These differences between Henry and Napier also reacted on the work of administration. Thirdly, the Sikhs were great fighters. To pacify them and to reconcile them to the British rule was no easy task. Then

Distribution of  
Work among the  
Triumvirate

Problem of the  
Board

there was the problem of law and order. An efficient police force had to be created to deal effectively with thieves and dacoits who were ravaging the countryside. Then there was an eight-hundred-mile-long frontier to defend. The north-western frontier inhabited by wild races was one of the most difficult regions in the world to govern and guard. Such indeed were the problems to be faced immediately. But they could not be tackled effectively until the means of transport and communication were greatly improved. Arnold, in this connection, says, "Its (Punjab's) towns asked for lines of inter-communication (roads), its rivers for bridges and its plains to be watered by irrigation."

The first and most important problem before the Board was the disbanding and disarming of the Sikh Army. A general muster of the Sikh soldiery was held at Lahore when all were paid up and disbanded. All the forts of the Sardars were dismantled, except those which were required for military purposes by the British. The soldiers were asked to give up their arms to the Government and it is said that as many as 1,19,796 arms were surrendered to the British. Dr Khilnani says that such a high-spirited people (the Sikhs) who about a few weeks ago had fought three grave battles for their faith and fatherland should exhibit utter humility and voluntarily surrender their most cherished belongings was an amazing phenomenon".<sup>1</sup> Latif says: "The ease and quiet with which large bodies of brave men, once so turbulent and formidable as to overawe their government and wield the destinies of the Empire, laid down their arms and abandoned the profession of war to adopt that of agriculture, was indicative of a wholesome effect produced by the British power".

Dalhousie, however, took the most promising and daring of the Sikh soldiers into British service. Five regiments of the Sikhs and five corps of the Sikh infantry were raised. This formed the nucleus of the *Punjab Force*. The Sikhs, so recruited, served the British with great loyalty on the banks of the Irrawadi and later on saved the British when they were facing the great crisis of 1857.

1 See Dr N. M. Khilnani—*The Punjab under Lawrences*

The next great problem that Henry Lawrence was called upon to tackle was to create a stable border between the Punjab and Afghanistan. To achieve that end, he took several

(3)  
A Stable Border  
land

(a) Guide Corps

The members of this 'Corps' mostly did 'Spy-work' and hence became the nucleus of the Intelligence Department

(b) The Punjab  
Frontier Force

of the Punjab. Secondly, he created a special force to fight in that area and this was named as the *Punjab Frontier Force*.<sup>1</sup> It consisted of 11,000 men

(c) Cantonments  
and the G.T.  
Road

of whom 10 per cent were Sikhs. Besides, along the whole frontier line of 500 miles, a chain of fortified posts was established. The Grand Trunk Road from Lahore to Peshawar was also completed.

To secure internal peace in the Punjab, a police force of 15,000 men was formed. A number of Sikhs were also enrolled in it. This force was divided into two distinct classes, the Military Police and the Civil Police. The Military Police was charged with the duty of patrolling the country, and guarding the treasuries and jails, whereas the Civil Police was entrusted with the duty of watch and ward in the villages and towns.

Police  
Arrangements

The maintenance of peace was greatly facilitated by the judicial system instituted by the Board. Its simplicity and vigour admirably met the requirements of the country. The simple procedure of the courts and the cheapness and promptness of justice made the task easier. The complicated system of the Regulation Provinces was not introduced here. To make matters still easier, the Board framed a concise code of civil laws or rather of civil procedure, based on the native customs and traditions.

Under John Lawrence's direction, the entire administration was reorganized. For administrative purposes, the Punjab was mapped out into districts, small enough to enable the officer in charge to gain a complete knowledge of and to exercise a personal influence over its population, and every such officer was entrusted with judicial, fiscal and magisterial powers. These district

John Lawrence :  
Reorganization of  
Civil and Revenue  
Administration

<sup>1</sup> This Punjab Frontier Force consisted of 5 regiments of cavalry, 59 infantry, 3 horse-field brigades, and one camel corps.



officers who later on began to be called Deputy Commissioners were required to base the procedure of administration and law as far as possible on native customs and institutions.

The revenue system was also reformed. Previous to 1849, a number of imports and transit duties were charged by the Lahore Government. Ranjit Singh used to levy as many as forty-eight imposts. John Lawrence, in order to encourage internal trade, retained only six and abolished all other imposts. The burden of the cultivator was also lightened. Ibbetson says: "The Sikhs often took half of the year's produce, besides a multitude of cesses ; our (British) demand never exceeds one-sixth, is frequently less than one-eighth, a tenth or a twelfth, and is in some cases not more than a fifteenth of the average gross produce".

Agriculture being the mainstay of the province, it was necessary to stabilize it by improving the means of irrigation. Punjab, with its rivers and rivulets, was especially suited for canal irrigation. Therefore the Board from the beginning addressed itself to the task of the repair and improvement of the Husli and other canals already in existence. But that was not enough and, consequently, plans soon began to be formulated for constructing new canals in the province.

Concluding, Bosworth Smith, John Lawrence's biographer says. "With singular success and in most thorough detail, the Board in a country totally destitute of the Government machinery created and established in a period of four years a system of administration complete in all its branches—military, civil and financial—in addition to which it provided roads, canals and jails, put an end to dacoity, codified the laws, refined the coinage and promoted agriculture."

## II

### John Lawrence as Chief Commissioner of Punjab 1853—58

The gulf between the two Lawrence Brothers gradually grew wider. The crisis was reached in 1852 over the question of what policy should be adopted towards the *jagirdars*. Henry supported them, whereas John did not. In February 1853, the Board of Administration, after four years of its life, was abolished and Sir

New Adminis-  
trative Arrange-  
ments

John Lawrence was appointed the first Chief Commissioner of the Punjab. He was, thus, made the sole head of the entire administration in the State and



could deal directly with the Supreme Government. Subordinate to him were appointed a Judicial Commissioner, the chief authority in the Judicial Department and a Financial Commissioner, the head of the Revenue Department.

During the period 1853-59, John Lawrence greatly added to the prosperity of the Punjab. He won over the Sikh Sardars by recognizing their claims to hereditary lands. The numerous dependents of the Lahore Durbar were bountifully provided and handsome allowances were granted to the royal widows. Grants and endowments of the Sikh Holy places—The Gurdwaras of Amritsar, Nankana Sahib, Taran Taran and Anandpur were confirmed. To safeguard the interests of the peasant proprietors, their holding were registered and their rights recorded; whereas in time of difficulty, remissions of land revenue were granted. In this way, he sought to heal the wounds of the Sikhs.

For the agricultural prosperity of the people, John Lawrence undertook irrigation works on a grand scale. It is estimated that he spent £80,000 on canals. The digging of the Bari Doab Canal was taken in hand. In addition, he encouraged the construction of roads. It is said that during his period, the construction of a long metalled road was taken in hand. He also undertook the survey of constructing a rail link between Amritsar and Multan which was completed in 1859. This was the first rail link in the Punjab. A sanatorium was established in the hills.

John Lawrence also devoted his attention to the promotion of education. C. H. Payne says that in the field of education, the task of Lawrence "was that of the pioneer". The Sikh Government did not maintain a single school, a few Mohammeden teachers scattered through the larger towns providing the only instruction available, and that of the most primitive description. Lawrence, immediately after Sir Charles Wood's despatch on education, set up a Department of Public Instruction in the Punjab. This Department set up a number of elementary schools in the Punjab, financed and managed by the government. After that, education developed rapidly in the Punjab<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In 1860's, a Government College was established at Lahore.

John Lawrence also caused a code of laws to be compiled. In this, he was assisted by Sir Robert Montgomery and Sir Richard Temple. This Code is known as the **The Punjab Civil Code** "Punjab Civil Code." It was so well prepared that later on it was introduced in all the other non-regulation provinces of India. Justice was further improved by bringing it near to the peasant's door by means of the small-cause courts, started all over the Province.

Female infanticide was wide-spread evil in the Province. Among the Sikhs, the Bedis were the most notorious for practising this great social evil, although they 'were not the only people who were guilty of it. The evil being a secret and domestic practice, the Government found real difficulty in uprooting it. However, John Lawrence was quite firm in his determination to put an end to it. It was through his firmness that by 1856 the evil was greatly reduced, though not completely ended.

The way John Lawrence won the confidence of the Sikhs and the way he contributed to the prosperity of the Punjab speak very highly of his administrative ability. This is one of the greatest achievements of John Lawrence. Within less than a decade, the Punjab was completely pacified and in the force and vigour of its police, in the simplicity and precision of Civil justice, and in the popularity of general administration, it began to vie with the best-regulated provinces in India."

#### **Books for Further Study**

1. Khilnani : *Punjab under the Lawrences*
2. Edwin Arnold ; *The Marquis of Dalhousie's Administration of British India*
3. Bosworth Smith : *Life of Lord Lawrence*
4. Trotter, L.J. : *History of the British Empire in India, 1844-1862*